

THE AGE OF REASON.

Part the Second.

BEING

AN INVESTIGATION

OF

TRUE AND FABULOUS THEOLOGY.

BY THOMAS PAINE, R

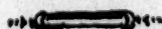
Author of the Works intituled,

COMMON SENSE—RIGHTS OF MAN, PART FIRST AND SECOND—AND DISSE-
TATIONS ON FIRST PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT.

L O N D O N :

Printed for and sold by DANIEL ISAAC EATON, Printer and
Bookfeller to the Supreme Majesty of the People, at the
Cock and Swine, No. 74, Newgate-Street.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.



1796.

S I R,



I HAVE just advertised in the London papers, the second edition of the *Age of Reason*, printed, the *Advertisement* says, from the Author's Manuscript, and entered at Stationer's Hall.—I have never sent any manuscript to any person.—It is herefore a forgery to say it is printed from the Author's Manuscript, and, I suppose is done to give the Publisher a pretence of Copy Right, which he has no title to.

I send you a printed Copy, which is the only one I have sent to London.—I wish you to make a cheap edition of it.—I know not by what means any copy has got over to London.—If any person has made a Manuscript Copy, I can have no doubt but it is full of errors.—I wish you would talk with Mr.—— upon this subject, as I wish to know by what means this trick has been played, and from whom the publisher has got possession of any copy.

Paris, December 4, 1795.

T. PAINE.

Printed for and sold by D. BARNES, Bookseller, in the Strand, near the Theatre Royal, and at the Bookstore of the Supreme Majesty of the People, at the
Cock and Swine, No. 25, Newgate Street.
PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.



PREFACE.

I HAVE mentioned in the former part of *The Age of Reason*, that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon Religion; but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, that existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793, determined me to delay it no longer. The just and humane principles of the revolution, which philosophy had first diffused, had been departed from. The Idea, always dangerous to Society as it is derogatory to the Almighty—that priests could forgive sins—though it seemed to exist no longer, had blunted the feelings of humanity, and callously prepared men for the commission of all crimes. The intolerant spirit of church persecution had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals, styled Revolutionary, supplied the place of an inquisition; and the Guillotine of the Stake. I saw many of my most intimate friends destroyed; others daily carried to prison; and I had reason to

believe, and had also intimations given me, that the same danger was approaching myself.

Under these disadvantages, I began the former part of the Age of Reason; I had, besides, neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any; notwithstanding which, I have produced a work that no Bible Believer, though writing at his ease, and with a Library of Church books about him can refute. Towards the latter end of December of that year, a motion was made and carried, to exclude foreigners from the Convention. There were but two, Anacharsis Cloots and myself, and I saw I was particularly pointed at by Bourdon de l'Oise, in his speech on that motion.

Conceiving, after this, that I had but a few days of liberty, I sat down, and brought the work to a close as speedily as possible; and I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared, before a guard came about three in the morning, with an order, signed by the two Committees of Public Safety and Surety General, for putting me in arrestation as a foreigner, and conveying me to the prison of the Luxembourg. I contrived, in my way there, to call on Joel Barlow, and I put the Manuscript of the work into his hands, as more safe than in my possession in prison; and not knowing what might be the fate in France, either of the writer or the work, I addressed it to the protection of the citizens of the United States.

It is justice that I say, that the guard who executed this order, and the interpreter to the Committee of General Surety, who accompanied them to examine my papers, treated me not only with civility, but with respect. The keeper of the Luxembourg, Benoit, a man of a good heart, shewed to me every friendship in his power, as did also all his family, while he continued in that station. He was removed from it, put into arrestation, and carried before the tribunal upon a malignant accusation, but acquitted.

After I had been in the Luxembourg about three weeks, the Americans, then in Paris, went in a body to the Convention, to reclaim me as their countryman and friend; but were answered by the President, Vadier, who was also President of the Committee of Surety General, and had signed the order for my arrestation, that I was born in England. I heard no more after this, from any person out of the walls of the prison, till the fall of Robespierre, on the 9th of Thermidor. July 27, 1794.

About two months before this event, I was seized with a fever, that in its progress had every symptom of becoming mortal, and from the effects of which I am not recovered. It was then that I remembered with renewed satisfaction, and congratulated myself most sincerely, on having written the former part of, "The Age of Reason." I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less. I know therefore, by experience, the conscientious trial of my own principles.

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I was then with three chamber comrades: Joseph Vanhuele of Bruges, Charles Bastini, and Michael Robyns of Louvain. The unceasing and anxious attention of these three friends to me, by night and day, I remember with gratitude and mention with pleasure. It happened that a physician (Dr. Graham,) and a surgeon (Mr. Bond) part of the suite of General O'Hara, were then in the Luxembourg: I ask not myself, whether it be convenient to them, as men under the English Government, that I express to them my thanks; but I should reproach myself if I did not; and also to the physician of the Luxembourg, Dr. Markoski.

I have some reason to believe, because I cannot discover any other, that this illness preserved me in existence. Among the papers of Robespierre, that were examined and reported upon to the Convention, by a Committee of Deputies, is a note in the hand writing of Robespierre, in the following words:

Demander que Thomas Paine soit decreté d'accusation, pour l'interêt de l'Amerique autant que de la France.	Demand that Thomas Paine be decreed of accusation, for the interest of America as well as of France.
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From what cause it was that the intention was not put in execution, I know not, and cannot inform myself; and therefore I ascribe it to impossibility, on account of that illness.

The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return into the Convention, and which I accepted, to shew I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles, or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated, that they are to be abandoned.

I have seen, since I have been at liberty, several publications written, some in America, and some in England, as answers to the former part of "The Age of Reason." If the authors of these can amuse themselves by so doing, I shall not interrupt them. They may write against the work, and against me, as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on. They will find, however, by this Second Part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work, and spin their cobweb over again. The first is brushed away by accident.

They will now find that I have furnished myself with a Bible and Testament; and I can say also, that I have found them to be much worse books than I had conceived. If I have erred in any thing, in the former part of the Age of Reason, it has been by speaking better of some parts than they deserved.

I observe, that all my opponents resort, more or less, to what they call Scripture Evidence and Bible Authority,

Authority, to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject, as to confound a dispute about authenticity, with a dispute about doctrines; I will, however, put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin.

Oct. 1795.

THOMAS PAINE.

THE THE AGE OF REASON.

PART THE SECOND.

IT has often been said that any thing may be proved from the Bible; but before any thing can be admitted as proved by Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it be doubtful, it ceases to have authority, and cannot be admitted as proof of any thing.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all Christian priests and preachers, to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth, and as the word of God; they have disputed and wrangled, and have anathematized each other about the supposable meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another, that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it meant neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they have called *understanding* the Bible.

It has happened that all the answers that I have seen to the former part of the *Age of Reason* have been written by priests; and these pious men, like their predecessors, contend and wrangle, and *understand* the Bible; each understands it differently, but each understands it best; and they have agreed in nothing, but in telling their readers, that Thomas Paine understands it not.

Now, instead of wasting their time, and heating themselves in fractious disputations about doctrinal points drawn from the Bible, these men *ought to know*, and if they do not, it is civility to inform them, that the first thing to be *understood* is, whether there is sufficient authority for believing the Bible to be the word of God, or whether there is not?

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There are matters in that book, said to be done by the *express command* of God, that are as shocking to humanity, and to every idea we have of moral justice, as any thing done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon, in France; by the English government in the East Indies; or by any other assassin in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, &c. that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who, as the history itself shews, had given them no offence; *that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women, and children; that they left not a soul to breathe;* expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that too with exulting ferocity; are we sure these things are facts? are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned these things to be done? are we sure that the books that tell us so, were written by his authority.

It is not the antiquity of a tale, that is any evidence of its truth; on the contrary, it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be suspected as any other.

To charge the commission of things upon the Almighty, which, in their own nature, and by every rule of moral justice, are crimes, as all assassination is, and more especially the assassination of infants, is matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us, that those assassinations were done by the *express command of God*. To believe therefore the Bible to be true, we must *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? And to read the Bible without horror, we must undo every thing that is tender, sympathising, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible is fabulous, than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.

But in addition to all the moral evidence against the Bible, I will, in the progress of this work, produce such other evidence, as even a priest cannot deny; and shew from that evidence, that the Bible is not entitled to credit, as being the word of God.

But before I proceed to this examination, I will shew wherein the Bible differs from all other ancient writings with respect to the nature of the evidence necessary to establish its authenticity; and this is the more proper to be done, because the advocates of the Bible, in their answers to the former part of the *Age of Reason*, undertake to say, and they put some stress there-
on,

on, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established, as that of any other ancient book: as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.

I know, however, but of one ancient book that authoritatively challenges universal consent and belief; and that is *Euclid's Elements of Geometry**; and the reason is, because it is a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author and of every thing relating to time, place and circumstance. The matters contained in that book would have the same authority they now have, had they been written by any other person, or had the work been anonymous, or had the author never been known; for the identical certainty of who was the author, makes no part of our belief of the matters contained in the book. But it is quite otherwise with respect to the books ascribed to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, &c. those are books of *testimony*, and they testify of things naturally incredible; and therefore the whole of our belief, as to the authenticity of those books, rests, in the first place, upon the *certainty* that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first, that is, may believe the certainty of the authorship, and yet not the testimony; in the same manner that we may believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case, and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found, that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony, more especially as to things naturally incredible; such as that of talking with God face to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man.

The greatest part of the other ancient books are works of genius; of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle to Demosthenes, to Cicero, &c. here again the author is not an essential in the credit we give to any of those works; for as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now, were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true; for it is the poet only that is admired; and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors, (Moses for instance,) as we dis-

* Euclid, according to chronological history, lived three hundred years before Christ, and about one hundred before Archimedes; he was of the city of Alexandria in Egypt.

believe the things related by Homer, there remains nothing of Moses in our estimation, but an imposter. As to the ancient historians, from Herodotus to Tacitus, we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credible, and no further; for if we do, we must believe the two miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Vespian, that of curing a lame man, and a blind man, in just the same manner as the same things are told of Jesus Christ by his historians. We must also believe the miracle cited by Josephus, that of the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army pass, as is related of the Red Sea in Exodus. These miracles are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet we do not believe them; consequently the degree of evidence necessary to establish our belief of things naturally incredible, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, is far greater than that which obtains our belief to natural and probable things; and therefore the advocates for the Bible have no claim to our belief of the Bible, because that we believe things stated in other ancient writings; since that we believe the things stated in those writings no farther than they are probable and credible, or because they are self evident, like Euclid; or admire them because they are elegant, like Homer; or approve them, because they are sedate, like Plato; or judicious, like Aristotle.

Having premised those things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible; and I begin with what are called the five books of Moses, *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to shew, that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them; and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted history of the life of Moses, and of the times in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses; as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred, or several thousand years ago.

The evidence that I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves; and I will confine myself to this evidence only. Were I to refer for proofs to any of the ancient authors, whom the advocates of the Bible call prophane authors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert theirs: I will therefore come on them on their own ground, and oppose them with their own weapon, the Bible.

In the first place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books; and that he is the author, is altogether

gether an unfounded opinion got abroad, nobody knows how. The style and manner in which those books are written, give no room to believe, or even to suppose, they were written by Moses; for it is altogether the style and manner of another person speaking of Moses. In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, (for every thing in Genesis is prior to the times of Moses, and not the least allusion is made to him therein,) the whole, I say, of these books is in the third person; it is always, *the Lord said unto Moses, or Moses said unto the Lord; or Moses said unto the People, or the People said unto Moses*; and this is the style and manner that historians use in speaking of the person whose lives and actions they are writing. It may be said that a man may speak of himself in the third person, and therefore it may be supposed that Moses did: but supposition proves nothing; and if the advocates for the belief that Moses wrote those books himself, have nothing better to advance than supposition they may as well be silent.

But granting the grammatical right, that Moses might speak of himself in the third person, because any man might speak of himself in that manner, it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books, that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd:—for example, Numbers, chap. xii. ver. 3. “*Now the man Moses was VERY MEEK above all the men which were on the face of the earth.*” If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men, he was one of the most vain and arrogant of coxcombs; and the advocates for those books may now take which side they please, for both sides are against them: if Moses was not the author, the books are without authority; and if he was the author, the author is without credit, because, to boast of *meekness*, is the reverse of meekness, and is *a lie in sentiment*.

In Deuteronomy, the style and manner of writing, marks more evidently than in the former books, that Moses is not the writer. The manner here used is dramatical; the writer opens the subject by a short introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses as in the act of speaking, and when he has made Moses finish his harrangue, he (the writer) resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death, funeral, and character of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs four times in this book; from the first verse of the first chapter, to the end of the fifth verse, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of making his harrangue, and this continues to the end of the 40th verse of the fourth chapter; here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence

sequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

The writer opens the subject again in the first verse of the fifth chapter, though it is only by saying, that Moses called the people of Israel together; he then introduces Moses as before, and continues him as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 26th chapter. He does the same thing at the beginning of the 27th chapter, and continues Moses, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 28th chapter. At the 29th chapter the writer speaks again through the whole of the first verse, and the first line of the second verse, where he introduces Moses for the last time, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 33d chapter.

The writer having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward, and speaks through the whole of the last chapter: he begins by telling the reader that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah, that he saw from thence the land which (the writer says) had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that *he*, Moses died there, in the land of Moab, that he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, but that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day, that is unto the time in which the writer lived, who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The writer then tells us, that Moses was one hundred and ten years of age when he died—that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and he concludes, by saying, that there arose not a prophet *since* in Israel like unto Moses, whom, says this anonymous writer, the Lord knew face to face.

Having thus shewn, as far as grammatical evidence implies, that Moses was not the writer of those books, I will, after making a few observations on the inconsistencies of the writer of the book of Deuteronomy, proceed to shew from the historical and chronological evidence contained in those books, that *Moses was not*, because *he could not be*, the writer of them; and consequently, that there is no authority for believing, that the inhuman and horrid butcheries of men, women, and children, told of in those books were done, as those books say they were, at the command of God. It is a duty incumbent on every true deist, that he vindicates the moral justice of God, against the calumnies of the Bible.

The writer of the book of Deuteronomy, whoever he was, for it is an anonymous work, is obscure, and also contradictory with himself in the account he has given of Moses.

After telling that Moses went to the top of Pisgah (and it does not appear from any account that he ever came down again,) he tells us, that Moses died *there* in the land of Moab, and that *he* buried him in a valley in the land of Moab: but as there is no antecedent to the pronoun *he*, there is no knowing
who

who *he* was, that did bury him. If the writer meant that he (God) buried him, how should *he* (the writer) know it? or why should we (the readers) believe him? since we know not who the writer was that tells us so, for certainly Moses could not himself tell where he was buried.

The writer also tells us, that no man knoweth where the sepulchre of Moses is unto this day, meaning the time in which this writer lived; how then should he know that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab? for as the writer lived long after the time of Moses, as is evident from his using the expression of *unto this day*, meaning a great length of time after the death of Moses, he certainly was not at his funeral; and, on the other hand, it is impossible that Moses himself could say, that *no man knoweth where the sepulchre is unto this day*. To make Moses the speaker, would be an improvement on the play of a child that hides himself, and cries *nobody can find me*; nobody can find Moses.

This writer has no where told us how he came by the speeches which he has put into the mouth of Moses to speak, and therefore we have a right to conclude, that he either composed them himself, or wrote them from oral tradition. One or other of these is the more probable, since he has given, in the fifth chapter, a table of commandments, in which that called the fourth commandment is different from the fourth commandment in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. In that of Exodus, the reason given for keeping the seventh day is, because (says the commandment) God made the heavens and the earth in six days. and rested on the seventh; but in that of Deuteronomy, the reason given is that it was the day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and *therefore*, says this commandment *the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day*. This makes no mention of the creation, nor that of the coming out of Egypt. There are also many things given as laws of Moses in this book, that are not to be found in any of the other books among which is that inhuman and brutal law, chap. xxi. ver. 18, 19, 20, 21, which authorizes parents, the father and the mother, to bring their own children to have them stoned to death, for what is pleased to call stubbornness. But priests have always been fond of preaching up Deuteronomy, for Deuteronomy preaches up tythes: and it is from this book, chap. xxv. ver. 4, they have taken the phrase and applied it to tything, that *thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn*: and that this might not escape observation, they have noted it in the table of contents, at the head of the chapter, though it is only a single verse of less than two lines. O priests! priests! ye are willing to be compared to an ox, for the sake
of

of tythes. Though it is impossible for us to know *identically* who the writer of Deuteronomy was, it is not difficult to discover him *professionally*, that he was some Jewish priest, who lived, as I shall shew in the course of this work, at least three hundred and fifty years after the time of Moses.

I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology that I shall use is the Bible chronology; for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of any thing, but to make the Bible itself prove historically and chronologically that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is therefore proper that I inform the readers (such an one, at least as may not have the opportunity of knowing it) that in the larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of shewing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and consequently the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

I begin with the book of Genesis. In the 14th chapter of Genesis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken prisoner in a battle between the four kings against five, and carried off; and that when the account of Lot being taken, came to Abraham, that he armed all his household, and marched to rescue Lot from the captors; and that he pursued them unto Dan, (ver 14.)

To shew in what manner this expression of *pursuing them unto Dan* applies to the case in question, I will refer to two circumstances, the one in America, the other in France. The city now called New York, in America, was originally New Amsterdam; and the town in France, lately called Havre Marat, was before called Havre-de-Grace. New Amsterdam was changed to New York in the year 1664: Havre-de-Grace to Havre Marat in the year 1793. Should, therefore, any writing be found, though without date, in which the name of New York should be mentioned it would be certain evidence that such a writing could not have been written before, and must have been written after New Amsterdam was changed to New York, and consequently not till after the year 1664, or at least during the course of that year. And in like manner, any dateless writing, with the name of Havre-Marat, would be certain evidence that such a writing must have been written after Havre-de-Grace became Havre-Marat, and consequently not till after the year 1793, or at least during the course of that year.

I now come to the application of those cases, and to shew that there was no such place as Dan, till many years after the death of Moses; and consequently that Moses could not be the writer

of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them unto Dan is given.

The place that is called Dan in the Bible, was originally a town of the Gentiles, called Laish; and when the tribe of Dan seized upon this town, they changed it's name to Dan, in commemoration of Dan, who was the father of that tribe, and the great grandson of Abraham.

To establish this in proof, it is necessary to refer from Genesis to the 18th chapter of the book called the book of Judges. It is there said, (ver. 27,) that *they (the Danites) came unto Laish to a people that were quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword, (the Bible is filled with murder,) and burned the city with fire; and they built a city, (ver. 28,) and dwelt therein, and they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.*

This account of the Danites taking possession of Laish, and changing it to Dan, is placed in the book of Judges immediately after the death of Sampson. The death of Sampson is said to have happened 1120 years before Christ, and that of Moses 1451 before Christ; and therefore, according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called Dan till 331 years after the death of Moses.

There is a striking confusion between the historical and the chronological arrangement in the book of Judges. The five last chapters, as they stand in the book, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters; they are made to be 28 years before the 16th chapter, 266 before the 15th, 245 before the 13th, 195 before the 9th, 90 before the 4th, and 15 years before the 1st chapter. This shews the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible. According to the chronological arrangement, the taking of Laish, and giving it the name of Dan, is made to be twenty years after the death of Joshua, who was the successor of Moses; and by the historical order, as it stands in the book, it is made to be 306 years after the death of Joshua, and 331 after that of Moses; but they both exclude Moses from being the writer of Genesis, because according to either of the statements, no such a place as Dan existed in the time of Moses; and therefore the writer of Genesis must have been some person that lived after the town of Laish had the name of Dan; and who that person was nobody knows, and consequently the book of Genesis is anonymous, and without authority.

I come now to state another point of historical and chronological evidence, and to shew therefrom, as in the preceding case, that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis.

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In the 36th chapter of Genesis there is given a genealogy of the sons and descendants of Esau, who are called Edomites, and also a list, by name, of the kings of Edom; in enumerating of which, it is said, ver. 31, "*And these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*"

Now, were any dateless writing to be found, in which, speaking of any past events, the writer should say, these things happened before there was any congress in America, or before there was any convention in France, it would be evidence that such writing could not have been written before, and could only be written after there was a congress in America, or a convention in France, as the case might be: and consequently that it could not be written by any person who died before there was a congress in the one country, or a convention in the other.

Nothing is more frequent, as well in history as in conversation, than to refer to a fact in the room of a date; it is most natural so to do, first, because a fact fixes itself in the memory better than a date; secondly, because the fact includes the date and serves to give two ideas at once; and this manner of speaking by circumstances, implies as positively, that the fact alluded to is past, as if it was so expressed. When a person in speaking upon any matter, says, it was before I was married, or before my son was born, or before I went to America, or before I went to France, it is absolutely understood, and intended to be understood, that he has been married, that he has had a son, that he has been in America, or been in France. Language does not admit of using this mode of expression in any other sense; and whenever such an expression is found any where, it can only be understood in the sense in which only it could have been used.

The passage, therefore, that I have quoted,—"*that these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel,*" could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and consequently that the book of Genesis, so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least. This is the positive sense of the passage: but the expression, *any king*, implies more kings than one; at least it implies two; and this will carry it to the time of David; and if taken in a general sense, it carries itself through all times of the Jewish monarchy.

Had we met with this verse in any part of the Bible that professed to have been written after kings began to reign in Israel, it would have been impossible not to have seen the application of it. It happens then that this is the case; the two books of Chronicles, which give a history of all the kings of Israel,

Israel, are *professedly*, as well as in fact, written after the Jewish monarchy began, and this verse that I have quoted, and all the remaining verses of the 36th chapter of Genesis, are, word for word, in the first chapter of Chronicles, beginning at the 43d verse.

It was with consistency that the writer of the Chronicles could say, as he has said, 1st Chron. chap. i. verse 43, *These are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, because he was going to give, and has given, a list of the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as any thing can be proved from historical language, that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, and probably not so old as the book of Homer, or as Æsop's fables; admitting Homer to have been, as the tables of Chronology state, contemporary with David or Solomon; and Æsop to have lived about the end of the Jewish monarchy.

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian Tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to eight and nine hundred years, becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the Mythology.

Besides the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score, or on the pretence of religion; and under that mask, or that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation, of which I will state only one instance:

When the Jewish army returned from one of their plundering and murdering excursions, the account goes on as follows Numbers, chap. xxxi. ver. 13.

“And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wrath with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle; and Moses said unto them, *Have ye saved all the women alive?* behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the council of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among

among the congregation of the Lord. Now, therefore, *kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him; but all the women-children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.*"

Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses, if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters.

Let any mother put herself in the situation of those mothers one child murdered, another destined to violation and herself in the hands of an executioner: let any daughter put herself in the situation of those daughters, destined as prey to the murderers of a mother and a brother, and what will be their feelings? It is in vain that we attempt to impose upon nature, for nature will have her course, and the religion that tortures all her social ties is a false religion.

After this detestable order, follows an account of the plunder taken, and the manner of dividing it; and here it is that the profaneness of priestly hypocrisy increases the catalogue of crimes. Verse 37, "*And the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen; and the beeves were thirty and six thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and twelve; and the asses were thirty thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and one; and the persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two.*" In short the matters contained in this chapter, as well as in many other parts of the Bible, are too horrid for humanity to read, or for decency to hear; for it appears from the 35th verse of this chapter, that the number of women children consigned to debauchery, by the order of Moses was thirty-two thousand.

People in general know not what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition they take it for granted, that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it; and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty to the book which they have been taught to believe was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?

But to return to my subject, that of shewing that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him, and that the Bible is spurious. The two instances I have already given would be sufficient, without any additional evidence, to invalidate the authenticity

authenticity of any book that pretended to be four or five hundred years more ancient than the matters it speaks of or refers to, as facts; for in the case of *pursuing them unto Dan*, and of the *kings that reigned over the children of Israel*, not even the flimsy pretence of prophecy can be pleaded. The expressions are in the preter tense, and it would be downright ideotism to say that a man could prophecy in the preter tense.

But there are many other passages scattered throughout those books, that unite in the same point of evidence. It is said in Exodus (another of the books ascribed to Moses), chap. xvi. ver. 34, "*And the children of Israel did eat manna until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.*"

Whether the children of Israel ate manna or not, or what manna was, or whether it was any thing more than a kind of fungus, or small mushroom, or other vegetable substance common to that part of the country, makes no part of my argument; all that I mean to shew is, that it is not Moses that could write this account, because the account extends itself beyond the life time of Moses. Moses according to the Bible, (but it is such a book of lies and contradictions, there is no knowing which part to believe, or whether any), died in the wilderness, and never came upon the borders of the land of Canaan; and consequently it could not be he, that said what the children of Israel did, or what they ate when they came there. This account of eating manna, which they tell us was written by Moses, extends itself to the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses; as appears by the account given in the book of Joshua, after the children of Israel had passed the river Jordan, and came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Joshua, chap. v. ver. 12. "*And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*"

But a more remarkable instance than this occurs in Deuteronomy; which while it shews that Moses could not be the writer of that book, shews also the fabulous notions that prevailed at that time about giants. In the third chapter of Deuteronomy, among the conquests said to be made by Moses, is an account of the taking of Og, king of Basan, verse 12. "*For only Og, king of Basan, remained of the race of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron, is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.*" A cubit is 1 foot $9\frac{8}{1000}$ inches; the length therefore of the bed was 16 feet 4 inches, and the breadth 7 feet 4 inches:

ches: thus much for this giant's bed. Now for the historical part which, though the evidence is not so direct and positive as in the former cases, it is nevertheless very presumable and corroborating evidence, and is better than the *best* evidence on the contrary side.

The writer by way of proving the existence of this giant, refers to his bed, as to an *ancient relick*, and says, is it not in Rabbath (or Rabbah) of the children of Ammon? meaning that it is; for such is frequently the Bible method of affirming a thing. But it could not be Moses that said this, because Moses could know nothing about Rabbah, nor of what was in it. Rabbah was not a city belonging to this giant king, nor was it one of the cities that Moses took. The knowledge, therefore, that this bed was at Rabbah, and of the particulars of its dimensions must be referred to the time when Rabbah was taken, and this was not till four hundred years after the death of Moses, for which see 2 Sam. chap. xii. ver. 26. "And Joab (David's general) fought against *Rabbah of the children of Ammon*, and took the royal city, &c."

As I am not undertaking to point out all the contradictions in time, place, and circumstance, that abound in the books ascribed to Moses, and which prove to demonstration, that those books could not be written by Moses, nor in the time of Moses; I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to shew that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and without authority. The evidence I shall produce is contained in the book itself; I will not go out of the Bible for proof against the supposed authenticity of the Bible. False testimony is always good against itself.

Joshua, according to the first chapter of Joshua, was the immediate successor of Moses; he was moreover a military man, which Moses was not; and he continued as chief of the people of Israel twenty-five years; that is from the time that Moses died, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1451 years before Christ, until 1426 years before Christ, when, according to the same chronology, Joshua died. If therefore we find in this book, said to have been written by Joshua, references to *facts done* after the death of Joshua, it is evidence that Joshua could not be the author; and also that the book could not have been written till after the time of the latest fact which it records. As to the character of the book, it is horrid; it is a military history of rapine and murder; as savage and brutal as those recorded of his predecessor in villainy and hypocrisy, Moses; and the blasphemy consists, as in the former books in ascribing those deeds to the orders of the Almighty.

In the first place, the book of Joshua, as is the case in the preceding books, is written in the third person; it is the
historian

historian of Joshua that speaks, for it would have been absurd and vain-glorious, that Joshua should say of himself, as is said of him in the last verse of the sixth chapter, that "*his fame was noised throughout all the country.*" I now come more immediately to the proof.

In the 24th chapter, ver. 31, it is said, "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and *all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua.*" Now in the name of common sense, can it be Joshua that relates what people had done after he was dead? This account must not only have been written by some historian that lived after Joshua, but that lived also after the elders that had out-lived Joshua.

There are several passages of a general meaning with respect to time, scattered throughout the book of Joshua, that carries the time in which the book was written to a distance from the time of Joshua, but without marking by exclusion any particular time, as in the passage above quoted. In that passage the time that intervened between the death of Joshua, and the death of the elders, is excluded descriptively and absolutely, and the evidence substantiates that the book could not have been written till after the death of the last.

But though the passages to which I allude, and which I am going to quote, do not designate any particular time by exclusion, they imply a time far more distant from the days of Joshua, than is contained between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders. Such is the passage, chap. x. ver. 14; where, after giving an account that the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, at the command of Joshua, (a tale fit only to amuse children*,) the passage

* This tale of the sun standing still upon mount Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, is one of those fables that detects itself. Such a circumstance could not have happened without being known all over the world. One half would have wondered why the sun did not rise, and the other why it did not set; and the tradition of it would be universal; whereas there is not a nation in the world that knows any thing about it. But why must the moon stand still? What occasion could there be for moon-light in the day-time, and that too whilst the sun shined? As a poetical figure, the whole is well enough; it is akin to that in the song of Deborah and Baruk, *The stars in their courses, fought against Sisera*; but it is inferior to the figurative declaration of Mahomet, to the persons who came to expostulate with him on his goings on; *Wert thou, said he, to come to me with the sun in thy right hand, and the moon in thy left it should not alter my career.* For Joshua to have exceeded Mahomet, he should have put the sun and moon, one in each pocket, and carried them as Guy Faux carried his dark lanthorn, and taken them out to shine as he might happen to want them. The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime, makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous, makes the sublime again; the account, however, abstracted from the poetical fancy, shews the ignorance of Joshua, for he should have commanded the earth to have stood still.

says—

says—"And there was no day like that, before it, nor *after it*, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of man.

The time implied by the expression *after it*, that is, after that day, being put in comparison with all the time that passed *before it*, must, in order to give any expressive signification to the passage, mean a *great length of time*:—for example it would have been ridiculous to have said so the next day, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year; to give therefore meaning to the passage, comparative with the wonder it relates, and the prior time it alludes to, it must mean centuries of years; less however than one, would be trifling; and less than two, would be barely admissible.

A distant but general time is also expressed in the 8th chapter, where, after giving an account of the taking the city of Ai, it is said, ver. 28, "And Joshua burned Ai, and made it an heap for ever, a desolation *unto this day*;" and again, ver. 29, where speaking of the king of Ai, whom Joshua had hanged, and buried at the entering of the gate, it is said, "And he raised thereon a great heap of stones, which remaineth *unto this day*," that is, unto the day or time in which the writer of the book of Joshua lived. And again, in the 10th chapter, where after speaking of the five kings, whom Joshua had hanged on five trees, and then thrown in a cave, it is said, "And he laid great stones on the cave's mouth, which remain *unto this very day*."

In enumerating the several exploits of Joshua, and of the tribes, and of the places which they conquered or attempted, it is said, chap. xv. ver. 63, "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah *AT JERUSALEM unto this day*." The question upon this passage is, At what time did the Jebusites and the children of Judah dwell together at Jerusalem? as this matter occurs again in the first chapter of Judges, I shall reserve my observations till I come to that part.

Having thus shewn from the book of Joshua itself, without any auxiliary evidence whatever, that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and consequently without authority, I proceed, as before mentioned, to the book of judges.

The book of Judges is anonymous on the face of it; and therefore, even the pretence is wanting to call it the word of God; it has not so much as a nominal voucher; it is altogether fatherless.

This

This book begins with the same expression as the book of Joshua. That of Joshua begins chap. i. ver. 1. *Now after the death of Moses, &c.* and this of Judges, begins, *Now after the death of Joshua, &c.* This, and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author; but who he was, is altogether unknown; the only point that the book proves is, that the author lived long after the time of Joshua; for though it begins as if it followed immediately after his death, the second chapter is an epitome or abstract of the whole book, which, according to the Bible chronology, extends its history through a space of 306 years; that is from the death of Joshua, 1426 years before Christ, to the death of Sampson, 1120 years before Christ, and only 25 years before Saul went *to seek his father's asses, and was made king.* But there is good reason to believe, that it was not written till the time of David at least, and that the book of Joshua was not written before the same time.

In the first chapter of Judges, the writer, after announcing the death of Joshua, proceeds to tell what happened between the children of Judah and the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In this statement, the writer, having abruptly mentioned Jerusalem in the 7th verse, says immediately after, in the 8th verse, by way of explanation, “Now the children of Judah *had* fought against Jerusalem, and *taken* it;” consequently, this book could not have been written before Jerusalem had been taken. The reader will recollect the quotation I have just before made from the 15th chapter of Joshua, ver. 63, where it is said, that *the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem at this day;* meaning the time when the book of Joshua was written.

The evidence I have already produced, to prove that the books I have hitherto treated of, were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, nor till many years after their death, if such persons ever lived, is already so abundant, that I can afford to admit this passage with less weight than I am entitled to draw from it. For the case is, that so far as the Bible can be credited as an history, the city of Jerusalem was not taken till the time of David; and consequently, that the book of Joshua, and of Judges, were not written till after the commencement of the reign of David, which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.

The name of the city that was afterward called Jerusalem, was originally Jebus, or Jebusi, and was the capital of the Jebusites. The account of David's taking this city is given in 2 Samuel, chap. v. ver. 4, &c. also in 1 Chron. chap. xiv. ver. 4, &c. There is no mention in any part of the Bible that

it was ever taken before, nor any account that favours such an opinion. It is not said, either in Samuel or in Chronicles, that they *utterly destroyed men, women, and children; that they left not a soul to breathe*, as is said of their other conquests; and the silence here observed, implies that it was taken by capitulation and that the Jebusites, the native inhabitants, continued to live in the place after it was taken. The account, therefore, given in Joshua, that *the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah* at Jerusalem at this day, corresponds to no other time than after taking the city by David.

Having now shewn that every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Judges, is without authenticity, I come to the book of Ruth, an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl creeping sily to bed to her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the word of God. It is, however, one of the best books in the Bible, for it is free from murder and rapine.

I come next to the two books of Samuel, and to shew that those books were not written by Samuel, nor till a great length of time after the death of Samuel; and that they are, like all the former books, anonymous, and without authority.

To be convinced that these books have been written much later than the time of Samuel, and consequently not by him, it is only necessary to read the account which the writer gives of Saul going to seek his father's asses, and of his interview with Samuel, of whom Saul went to enquire about those lost asses, as foolish people now-a-days go to a conjurer to enquire after lost things.

The writer, in relating this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, does not tell it as a thing that had just then happened, but as an ancient *story in the time this writer lived*: for he tells it in the language or terms used at the time that *Samuel* lived, which obliges the writer to explain the story in the terms or language used in the time the *writer* lived.

Samuel, in the account given of him in the first of those books, chap. ix. is called *the seer*; and it is by this term that Saul enquires after him, ver. 11. "And as they, (Saul and his servant) went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water; and they said unto them, *is the seer here?*" Saul then went according to the direction of these maidens, and met Samuel without knowing him, and said unto him, ver. 18, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the *seer's house* is?" and Samuel answered Saul, and said, *I am the seer.*"

As the writer of the book of Samuel relates these questions and answers, in the language or manner of speaking used in the time they are said to have been spoken; and as that manner of speaking

speaking was out of use when this author wrote he found it necessary, in order to make the story understood to explain the terms in which these questions and answers are spoken; and he does this in the 9th verse, where he says, "*Before-time* in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God thus he spake, Come let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet, was *before-time* called a seer." This proves, as I have before said, that this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, was an ancient story at the time the book of Samuel was written and consequently that Samuel did not write it, and that the book is without authenticity.

But if we go further into those books, the evidence is still more positive that Samuel is not the writer of them; for they relate things that did not happen till several years after the death of Samuel. Samuel died before Saul; for the 1st of Samuel chap. xxviii. tells, that Saul and the witch of Endor conjured Samuel up after he was dead; yet the history of matters contained in those books, is extended through the remaining part of Saul's life, and to the latter end of the life of David, who succeeded Saul. The account of the death and burial of Samuel (a thing which he could not write himself) is related in the 25th chapter of the first book of Samuel; and the chronology affixed to this chapter makes this to be 1060 years before Christ; yet the history of this *first* book is brought down to 1056 years before Christ, that is, to the death of Saul, which was not till four years after the death of Samuel.

The second book of Samuel begins with an account of things that did not happen till four years after Samuel was dead; for it begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and it goes on to the end of David's reign, which was forty-three years after the death of Samuel; and therefore the books are in themselves positive evidence that they were not written by Samuel.

I have now gone through all the books in the first part of the Bible, to which the names of persons are affixed, as being the authors of those books, and which the church, styling itself the Christian church, have imposed upon the world as the writings of Moses, Joshua and Samuel; and I have detected and proved the falshood of this imposition. And now ye priests, of every description, who have preached and written against the former part of the *Age of Reason*, what have ye to say? Will ye with all this mass of evidence against you, and staring you in the face still have the assurance to march into your pulpits, and continue to impose these books on your congregations as the works of *inspired penmen*, and the word of God? when it is as evident as demonstration can make truth appear, that the persons who ye
say,

say, are the authors, are *not* the authors, and that ye know not who the authors are. What shadow of pretence have ye now to produce, for continuing the blasphemous fraud? What have ye still to offer against the pure and moral religion of deism, in support of your system of falshood, idolatry, and pretended revelation? Had the cruel and murdering orders, with which the Bible is filled, and the numberless torturing executions of men women, and children, in consequence of those orders, been ascribed to some friend, whose memory you revered, you would have glowed with satisfaction at detecting the falshood of the charge, and gloried in defending his injured fame. It is because ye are sunk in the cruelty of superstition, or feel no interest in the honour of your Creator, that ye listen to the horrid tales of the Bible, or hear them with callous indifference. The evidence I have produced, and shall still produce in the course of this work, to prove that the Bible is without authority will, whilst it wounds the stubbornness of a priest relieve and tranquillize the minds of millions: it will free them from all those hard thoughts of the Almighty, which priest-craft and the Bible had infused into their minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of his moral justice and benevolence.

I come now to the two books of Kings, and the two books of Chronicles. Those books are altogether historical, and are chiefly confined to the lives and actions of the Jewish kings, who in general were a parcel of rascals: but these are matters with which we have no more concern, than we have with the Roman emperors, or Homer's account of the Trojan war. Besides which, as those books are anonymous, and as we know nothing of the writer, or of his character, it is impossible for us to know what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein. Like all other ancient histories, they appear to be a jumble of fable and of fact, and of probable and of improbable things, but which distance of time and place, and change of circumstances in the world, have rendered obsolete and uninteresting.

The chief use I shall make of those books, will be that of comparing them with each other, and with other parts of the Bible, to shew the confusion, contradiction, and cruelty, in this pretended word of God.

The first book of Kings begins with the reign of Solomon, which according to the Bible chronology, was 1015 years before Christ; and the second book ends 588 years before Christ being a little after the reign of Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, after taking Jerusalem, and conquering the Jews, carried captive to Babylon. The two books include a space of four hundred and twenty-seven years.

The

The two books of Chronicles are an history of the same times, and in general of the same persons, by another author; for it would be absurd to suppose that the same author wrote the history twice over. The first book of Chronicles (after giving the genealogy from Adam to Saul, which takes up the first nine chapters) begins with the reign of David; and the last book ends, as in the last book of Kings, soon after the reign of Zedekiah, about 588 years before Christ. The two last verses of the last chapter bring the history fifty-two years more forward, that is to 536. But these verses do not belong to the book, as I shall shew, when I come to speak of the book of Ezra.

The two books of Kings, besides the history of Saul, David, and Solomon, who reigned over *all* Israel, contain an abstract of the lives of seventeen kings and one queen, who are stiled kings of Judah; and of nineteen, who are stiled kings of Israel, for the Jewish nation, immediately on the death of Solomon, split into two parties, who chose separate kings, and who carried on most rancorous wars against each other.

These two books are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery, and wars. The cruelties that the Jews had accustomed themselves to practise on the Canaanites, whose country they had savagely invaded, under a pretended gift from God, they afterwards practised as furiously on each other. Scarcely half their kings died a natural death, and in some instances, whole families were destroyed to secure possession to the successor, who, after a few years, and sometimes only a few months, or less, shared the same fate. In the tenth chapter of the second book of kings, an account is given of two baskets full of children's heads, 70 in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city; they were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by the orders of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel, on purpose to commit this bloody deed, and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Manaham, one of the kings of Israel, who had murdered Shallum, who had reigned but one month, it is said 2 Kings, chap. xv. ver. 16. that Manaham smote the city of Tiphshah, because they opened not the city to him, *and all the women therein that were with child be ripped up.*

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of *his chosen people*, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world of the purest piety and humanity, and not such a nation of ruffians and cut-throats as the ancient Jews were; a people, who corrupted by, and copying after such monsters and imposters as Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel and David, had distinguished themselves above

all

all others, on the face of the known earth, for barbarity and wickedness. If we will not stubbornly shut our eyes, and steel our hearts, it is impossible not to see, in spite of all that long-established superstition imposes upon the mind, that the flattering appellation of *his chosen people* is no other than a LIE, which the priests and leaders of the Jews had invented, to cover the baseness of their own characters; and which Christian priests, sometimes as corrupt, and often as cruel, have professed to believe.

The two books of Chronicles are a repetition of the same crimes; but the history is broken in several places, by the author leaving out the reign of some of their kings; and in this, as well as in that of Kings, there is such a frequent transition from kings of Judah, to kings of Israel, and from kings of Israel, to kings of Judah, that the narrative is obscure in the reading. In the same book the history sometimes contradicts itself: for example, in the second book of Kings, chap. i. ver. 8, we are told, but in rather ambiguous terms, that after the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel, Jehoram, or Joram, (who was of the house of Ahab), reigned in his stead in the *second year* of Jehoram, or Joram, son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; and in chap. viii. ver. 16, of the same book, it is said, and in the *fifth year* of Joram, the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, began to reign; that is, one chapter says, Joram of Judah, began to reign in the *second year* of Joram of Israel; and the other chapter says, that Joram of Israel began to reign in the *fifth year* of Joram of Judah.

Several of the most extraordinary matters related in one history, as having happened during the reign of such or such of their kings, are not to be found in the other in relating the reign of the same king: for example, the two first rival kings, after the death of Solomon, were Rehoboam and Jeroboam; and in 1 Kings, chap. xii. and xiii. an account is given of Jeroboam making an offering of burnt incense, and that a man, who is there called a man of God, cried out against the altar, chap. xiii. ver. 2, "O altar, altar! thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burned upon thee."—Ver. 3, "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, *Lay hold on him*; and his hand which he put out against him, *dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.*"

One

One would think that such an extraordinary case as this, (which is spoken of as a judgement), happening to the chief of one of the parties, and that at the first moment of the separation of the Israelites into two nations, would, if it had been true, been recorded in both histories. But though men in later times have believed *all that the prophets have said unto them*, it does not appear, that those prophets, or historians believed each other: they knew each other too well.

A long account also is given in kings about Elijah. It runs through several chapters, and concludes with telling, 2 Kings, chap. ii. ver. 11. "And it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) still went on, and talked, that behold there appeared *a chariot of fire, and horses of fire*, and parted them both asunder, and *Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven.*" Hum! this the author of Chronicles, miraculous as the story is, makes no mention of, though he mentions Elijah by name; neither does he say any thing of the story related in the second chapter of the same book of Kings, of a parcel of children calling Elisha *bald head, bald head*; and that this *man of God*, ver. 24, "turned back, and looked upon them, and *curst them in the name of the Lord*; and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." He also passes over in silence the story told, 2 Kings, chap. xiii. that when they were burying a man in the sepulchre, where Elisha had been buried, it happened that the dead man, as they were letting him down, (ver. 21,) "touched the bones of Elisha, and he (the dead man) *revived, and stood up on his feet.*" The story does not tell us whether they buried the man, notwithstanding he revived and stood upon his feet, or drew him up again. Upon all these stories, the writer of the Chronicles is as silent as any writer of the present day, who did not chuse to be accused of *lying*, or at least of romancing, would be about stories of the same kind.

But, however these two historians may differ from each other with respect to the tales related by either, they are silent alike with respect to those men stiled prophets, whose writing fill up the latter part of the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, is mentioned in Kings, and again in Chronicles, when these histories are speaking of that reign; but except in one or two instances at most, and those very slightly, none of the rest are so much as spoken of, or even their existence hinted at; though, according to the Bible chronology, they lived within the time those histories were written; and some of them long before. If those prophets, as they are called, were men of such importance in their day, as the compilers of the Bible, and priests, and commentators, have since represented them

them to be, how can it be accounted for, that not one of those histories should say any thing about them?

The history in the books of Kings and of Chronicles is brought forward, as I have already said to the year 588 before Christ; it will therefore be proper to examine, which of these prophets lived before that period.

Here follows a table of all the prophets, with the times in which they lived before Christ, according to the chronology affixed to the first chapter of each of the books of the prophets; and also of the number of years they lived before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

TABLE of the prophets, with the time in which they lived before Christ, and also before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

Names.	Years before Christ.	Years bef. Kings and Chronicles.	Observations.
Isaiah - -	760	172	mentioned.
Jeremiah - -	629	41	{ mentioned only in the last chapter of Chro- nicles.
Ezekiel - -	595	7	not mentioned.
Daniel - -	607	19	not mentioned.
Hosea - -	785	97	not mentioned.
Joel - -	800	212	not mentioned.
Amos - -	789	199	not mentioned.
Obadiah - -	789	199	not mentioned.
Jonah - -	862	274	see the note*.
Micah - -	750	162	not mentioned.
Nahum - -	713	125	not mentioned.
Habbakuk - -	620	38	not mentioned.
Zephaniah - -	630	42	not mentioned.
Haggai	} after the year 588		
Zechariah			
Malachi			

This table is either not very honourable for the Bible historians, or not very honourable for the Bible prophets; and

* In 2 Kings, chap. xiv. ver. 25, the name of Jonah is mentioned on account of the restoration of a tract of land by Jeroboam; but nothing further is said of him, nor is any allusion made to the book of Jonah, nor to his expedition to Nineveh, nor to his encounter with the whale.

I leave

I leave to priests and, commentators, who are very learned in little things, to settle the point of *etiquette* between the two; and to assign a reason, why the authors of Kings and of Chronicles have treated those prophets, whom, in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have considered as poets, with as much degrading silence as any historian of the present day would treat Peter Pindar.

I have one more observation to make on the book of Chronicles; after which I shall pass on to review the remaining books of the Bible.

In my observations on the book of Genesis, I have quoted a passage from the 36th chapter, ver. 31, which evidently refers to a time, *after* that kings began to reign over the children of Israel; and I have shewn that as this verse is verbatim the same as in 1 Chronicles, chap. 1. ver. 43, where it stands consistently with the order of history, which in Genesis it does not, that the verse in Genesis, and a great part of the 36th chapter, have been taken from Chronicles; and that the book of Genesis, though it is placed first in the Bible, and ascribed to Moses, has been manufactured by some unknown person, after the book of Chronicles was written, which was not until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses.

The evidence I proceed by, to substantiate this, is regular, and has in it but two stages. First, as I have already stated, that the passage in Genesis refers itself for *time* to Chronicles; secondly, that the book of Chronicles, to which this passage refers itself, was not *began* to be written until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses. To prove this, we have only to look into the thirteenth verse of the third chapter of the first book of Chronicles, where the writer, in giving the genealogy of the descendants of David, mentions *Zedekiah*; and it was in the time of *Zedekiah* that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, 588 years before Christ, and consequently more than 860 years after Moses. Those who have superstitiously boasted of the antiquity of the Bible, and particularly of the books ascribed to Moses, have done it without examination, and without any other authority than that of one credulous man telling it to another; for, so far as historical and chronological evidence applies, the very first book in the Bible is not so ancient as the book of Homer, by more than three hundred years, and is about the same age with *Æsop's Fables*.

I am not contending for the morality of Homer; on the contrary, I think it to be a book of false glory, and tending to inspire immoral and mischievous notions of honour; and with respect to *Æsop*, though the moral is in general just, the fable is often cruel; and the cruelty of the fable does more injury


to the heart, especially in a child, than the moral does good to the judgment.

Having now dismissed Kings and Chronicles, I come to the next in course, the book of Ezra.

As one proof among others I shall produce to shew the disorder in which this pretended word of God, the Bible, has been put together, and the uncertainty of who the authors were, we have only to look at the three first verses in Ezra, and the two last in Chronicles; for by what kind of cutting and shuffling has it been, that the three first verses in Ezra should be the two last verses in Chronicles, or that the two last in Chronicles, should be the three first in Ezra? Either the authors did not know their own works, or the compilers did not know the authors.

Two last verses of Chronicles.

Ver. 22. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also into writing, saying,


23 Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem which, is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up. 

Three first verses of Ezra.

Ver. 1. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also into writing, saying.

2. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem.

 The last verse in Chronicles is broken abruptly, and ends in the middle of a phrase with the word *up*, without signifying to what place. This abrupt break, and the appearance of the same verses in different books, shew, as I have already said, the

the disorder and ignorance in which the Bible has been put together, and that the compilers of it had no authority for what they were doing, nor we any authority for believing what they have done*.

The only thing that has any appearance of certainty in the book of Ezra, is the time in which it was written, which was immediately after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about 536 years before Christ. Ezra (who according to the Jewish commentators, is the same person as is called Eldras in the Apocrypha) was one of the persons who returned and who, it is probable, wrote the account of that affair. Nehemiah, whose books follow next to Ezra, was another of the returned persons; and who, it is also probable, wrote the account of the same affair, in the book that bears his name. But those accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other person, unless it be to the Jews, as a part of the history of their nation: and there is just as much of the word of God in those books, as there is in any of the histories of France, or Rapin's History of England, or the history of any other country.

* I observed, as I passed along, several broken and senseless passages in the Bible, without thinking them of consequence enough to be introduced in the body of the work; such as that, 1 Samuel, chap. xiii. ver. 1. where it is said, "Saul reigned *one year*; and when he had reigned *two years* over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men, &c." The first part of the verse, that Saul reigned *one year*, has no sense, since it does not tell us what Saul did, nor say any thing of what happened at the end of that *one year*; and it is besides, mere absurdity to say he reigned *one year*, when the very next phrase says he had reigned two; for if he had reigned two, it was impossible not to have reigned one.

Another instance occurs in Joshua, chap. v. where the writer tells us a story of an angel (for such the table of contents, at the head of the chapter, calls him) appearing unto Joshua; and the story ends abruptly, and without any conclusion. The story is as follows:—Ver. 13, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lift up his eyes and looked, and behold there stood a man over-against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Verse 14, "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the hosts of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, *What saith my Lord unto his servant?*" Ver. 15, "And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."—And what then? nothing: for here the story ends, and the chapter too.

Either this story is broken off in the middle, or it is a story told by some Jewish humourist, in ridicule of Joshua's pretended mission from God; and the compilers of the Bible, not perceiving the design of the story, has told it as a serious matter. As a story of humour and ridicule, it has a great deal of point; for it pompously introduces an angel in the figure of a man, with a drawn sword in his hand, before whom Joshua *falls on his face to the earth, and worships* (which is contrary to their second commandment;) and then, this most important embassy from heaven ends, in telling Joshua to *pull of his shoe*. It might as well have told him to pull up his breeches.

It is certain, however, that the Jews did not credit every thing their leaders told them, as appears from the cavalier manner in which they speak of Moses, when he was gone into the mount. "As for *this Moses*, say they, *we wot not what is become of him.*" Exod. chap. x. xxii. ver. 1.

But even in matters of historical record, neither of those writers are to be depended upon. In the second chapter of Ezra, the writer gives a list of the tribes and families, and of the precise number of souls of each that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem; and this enrolment of the persons so returned, appears to have been one of the principal objects for writing the book; but in this there is an error that destroys the intention of the undertaking.

The writer begins his enrolment in the following manner : Chap. ii. ver. 3, " The children of Parosh, two thousand one hundred seventy and four." Verse 4, " The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two." And in this manner he proceeds through all the families ; and in the 64th verse, he makes a total and says, the whole congregation together was *forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore.*

But whoever will take the trouble of casting up the several particulars; will find that the total is but 29,818; so that the error is 12,542*. What certainty then can there be in the Bible for any thing?

Nehemiah, in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family. He begins as in Ezra, by saying, chap vii. ver. 8. "The children of Parosih, two thousand three hundred and seventy two;" and so on through all the families. This list differs in several of the particulars from that of Ezra. In the 66th verse, Nehemiah makes a total, and says, as Ezra had said, "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore." But the particulars of this list make a total but of 31,089, so that the error here is 11271. These writers may do well enough for Bible makers, but not for any thing where truth and exactness is necessary.

The next book in course is the book of Esther. If Madam Esther thought it any honour to offer herself as a kept mistress

* Particulars of the families from the second chapter of Ezra.

Chap. ii		Bt. forward 11,577		Bt. forward 15,783		Bt. forward 19,444	
Ver.		Ver.		Ver.		Ver.	
3	2172	13	666	23	128	33	725
4	372	14	2056	24	42	34	345
5	775	15	454	25	743	35	3630
6	2812	16	98	26	621	36	973
7	1254	17	323	27	122	37	1052
8	945	18	112	28	223	38	1247
9	760	19	228	29	52	39	1017
10	642	20	95	30	156	40	74
11	623	21	123	31	1254	41	128
12	1222	22	56	32	320	42	139
						58	392
						60	652
<hr/>		<hr/>		<hr/>		<hr/>	
11,577		15,783		19,444		Total 29,818	

to

to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to queen Vashty, who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a shew of; (for the account says they had been drinking seven days, and were merry,) let Ester and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of our's, at least it is none of mine besides which, the story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous and is also anonymous. I pass on to the book of Job.

The book of Job differs in character from all the books we have hitherto passed over. Treachery and murder make no part of this book; it is the meditations of a mind strongly impressed with the vicissitudes of human life, and by turns sinking under, and struggling against the pressure. It is a highly wrought composition, between willing submission and involuntary discontent; and shews man, as he sometimes is, more disposed to be resigned than he is capable of being. Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats; on the contrary, his grief is often impetuous; but he still endeavours to keep a guard upon it, and seems determined, in the midst of accumulating ills, to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner of the book of Job in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, but without knowing at that time what I have learned since; which is, that from all the evidence that can be collected, the book of Job does not belong to the Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Abenezra and Spinoza, upon this subject; they both say that the book of Job carries no internal evidence of being an Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition, and the drama of the piece, are not Hebrew; that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a Gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only time this name is mentioned in the Bible) does not correspond to any Hebrew idea; and that the two convocations which the Deity is supposed to have made of those, whom the poem calls sons of God and the familiarity which this supposed Satan is stated to have with the Deity, are in the same case.

It may also be observed, that the book shews itself to be the production of a mind cultivated in science, which the Jews, so far from being famous for, were very ignorant of. The allusions to objects of natural philosophy are frequent and strong, and are of a different cast to any thing in the books known to be Hebrew. The astronomical names Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, are Greek, and not Hebrew names; and as it does
not

not appear from any thing that is to be found in the Bible, that the Jews knew any thing of astronomy, or that they studied it; they had no translation of those names into their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the poem.

That they Jews did translate the literary productions of the Gentile nations into the Hebrew language, and mix them with their own, is not a matter of doubt; the thirty first chapter of Proverbs is an evidence of this: it is there said, ver. 1, *The word of king Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him.* This verse stands as a preface to the proverbs that follow, and which are not the proverbs of Solomon, but of Lemuel; and this Lemuel was not one of the Kings of Israel, nor of Judah, but of some other country, and consequently a Gentile. The Jews, however, have adopted his proverbs, and as they cannot give any account who the author of the book of Job was, nor how they came by the book; and as it differs in character from the Hebrew writings, and stands totally unconnected with every other book and chapter in the Bible before it, and after it, it has all the circumstantial evidence of being originally a book of the Gentiles*.

The Bible-makers, and those regulators of time, the Bible chronologists, appear to have been at a loss where to place, and how to dispose of the book of Job; for it contains no one historical circumstance, nor allusion to any, that might serve to determine its place in the Bible. But it would not have answered the purpose of these men to have informed the world of their ignorance; and therefore they have affixed it to the æra of 1520 years before Christ, which is during the time the Israelites were in Egypt, and for which they have just as much authority and no more than I should have for saying it was a thousand years before that period. The probability, however,

* The prayer known by the name of *Augur's prayer*, in the 30th chapter of Proverbs, immediately preceding the proverbs of Lemuel, and which is the only sensible, well-conceived, and well-expressed prayer in the Bible, has much the appearance of being a prayer taken from the Gentiles. The name of Agur occurs on no other occasion than this; and he is introduced, together with the prayer ascribed to him, in the same manner, and nearly in the same words, that Lemuel and his proverbs are introduced in the chapter that follows: The first verse of the 30th chapter says, "The words of Augur, the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy;" here the word prophecy is used with the same application it has in the following chapter of Lemuel, unconnected with any thing of prediction. The prayer of Augur is in the 8th and 9th verses, "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither riches nor poverty, but feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, *Who is the Lord?* or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." This has not any of the marks of being a Jewish prayer; for the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for any thing but victory, vengeance, and riches.

is, that it is older than any book in the Bible; and it is the only one that can be read without indignation or disgust.

We know nothing of what the antient gentile world (as it is called) was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations; and it is from the Jewish accounts that we have learned to call them heathens. But as far as we know to the contrary, they were a just and moral people, and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice, by statutes and images as is done now-a-days both by statuary and by painting; but it does not follow from this, that they worshipped them any more than we do. I pass on to the book of

Psalms, of which it is not necessary to make much observation. Some of them are moral, and others are very revengeful, and the greater part relates to certain local circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time they were written, with which we have nothing to do. It is however, an error or an imposition, to call them the *Psalms of David*: they are a collection, as song-books are now-a-days, from different song-writers, who lived at different times. The 137th Psalm could not have been written till more than four hundred years after the time of David, because it is written in commemoration of an event, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, which did not happen till that distance of time. "*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof; for there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.*" As a man would say to an American, or to a Frenchman, or to an Englishman, sing us one of your American songs, or your French songs, or your English songs. This remark with respect to the time this psalm was written, is of no other use than to shew (among others already mentioned) the general imposition the world has been under; with respect to the authors of the Bible. No regard has been paid to time, place, and circumstance; and the names of persons have been affixed to the several books, which it was as impossible they should write, as that a man should walk in procession at his own funeral.

The book of proverbs. These like the *Psalms*, are a collection, and that from authors belonging to other nations than those of the Jewish nation, as I have shewn in the observations upon the book of *Job*: besides which, some of the proverbs ascribed to Solomon, did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon; for it is said in the first
verse

verse of the 25th chapter, "*These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah copied out.*" It was two hundred and fifty years from the time of Solomon, to the time of Hezekiah. When a man is famous, and his name is abroad, he is made the putative father of things he never said or did; and this, most probably has been the case with Solomon. It appears to have been the fashion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make jest-books, and father them upon those who never saw them.

The book of *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*, is also ascribed to Solomon, and that with much reason, if not with truth. It is written as the solitary reflections of a worn out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, *All is vanity!* A great deal of the metaphor and of the sentiment is obscure, most probably by translation; but enough is left to shew they were strongly pointed in the original*. From what is transmitted to us of the character makers and the chronologists should have managed this matter of Solomon, he was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy. He lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, are worse than none; and however it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection, by leaving it no point to fix upon; divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon; and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterwards endured. In this point of view, his preaching is unnecessary, because, to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the cause. Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, would have stood in place of the whole book. It was needless after this to say, that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

To be happy in old age, it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The mere man of pleasure is miserable in old age; and the mere drudge in business is but little better: whereas, natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure, and in spite of the gloomy dogma of priests, and of superstition, the study of those things is the study of the true theology; it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable, and of divine origin.

* *Those that look out of the window shall be darkened*, is an obscure figure in translation for loss of sight.

can any thing be
more than this

Those who knew Benjamin Franklin, will recollect, that his mind was ever young; his temper ever serene; science, that never grows grey, was always his mistress. He was never without an object, for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in an hospital waiting for death.

Solomon's Songs, amorous and foolish enough, but which wrinkled fanaticism has called divine. The compilers of the Bible have placed these songs after the book of Ecclesiastes; and the chronologists have affixed to them the æra of 1014 years before Christ, at which time Solomon, according to the same chronology, was nineteen years of age, and was then forming his seraglio of wives and concubines. The Bible-makers and the chronologists should have managed this matter a little better, and either have said nothing about the time, or chosen a time less inconsistent with the supposed divinity of those songs; for Solomon was then in the honey-moon of one thousand debaucheries.

It should also have occurred to them, that as he wrote, if he did write, the book of Ecclesiastes, long after these songs, and in which he exclaims, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that he included those songs in that description. This is the more probable, because he says, or somebody for him, Ecclesiastes, chap. ii. ver. 8, "*I got me men singers, and women singers, (most probably to sing those songs) and musical instruments of all sorts; and behold (ver. 11) all was vanity and vexation of spirit.*" The compilers, however, have done their work but by halves; for as they have given us the songs, they should have given us the tunes, that we might sing them.

The books, called the books of the Prophets, fill up all the remaining part of the Bible; they are sixteen in number, beginning with Isaiah, and ending with Malachi, of which I have given a list, in the observations upon Chronicles. Of these sixteen prophets, all of whom, except the three last, lived within the time the books of Kings and Chronicles were written; two only, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are mentioned in the history of those books. I shall begin with those two, reserving what I have to say on the general character of the men called prophets, to another part of the work.

Whoever will take the trouble of reading the book ascribed to Isaiah, will find it one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together; it has neither beginning, middle, nor end; and except a short historical part, and a few sketches of history in two or three of the first chapters, is one continued incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor, without application, and destitute of meaning; a school-boy would scarcely have been excusable for writing such stuff;

it is (at least in translation) that kind of composition and false taste that is properly called prose run mad.

The historical part begins at the 36th chapter, and is continued to the end of the 39th chapter. It relates some matters that are said to have passed during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, at which time Isaiah lived. This fragment of history begins and ends abruptly; it has not the least connection with the chapter that precedes it, nor with that which follows it, nor with any other in the book. It is probable, that Isaiah wrote this fragment himself, because he was an actor in the circumstances it treats of; but except this part, there are scarcely two chapters that have any connection with each other; one is entitled, at the beginning of the first verse, the burden of Babylon; another, the burden of Moab; another the burden of Damascus; another, the burden of Egypt; another, the burden of the Desert of the Sea; another, the burden of the Valley of Vision; as you would say, the story of the knight of the burning mountain, the story of Cinderella, or the glassen slipper; the story of the sleeping beauty in the wood, &c. &c.

I have already shewn in the instance of the two last verses of Chronicles, and the three first in Ezra, that the compilers of the Bible mixed and confounded the writings of different authors with each other; which alone, were there no other cause, is sufficient to destroy the authenticity of any compilation, because it is more than presumptive evidence, that the compilers are ignorant who the authors were. A very glaring instance of this occurs in the book ascribed to Isaiah: the latter part of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, so far from having been written by Isaiah, could only have been written by some person, who lived at least an hundred and fifty years after Isaiah was dead.

These chapters are a compliment to Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as is stated in Ezra. The last verse of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, are in the following words: "*That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; and to the temple, thy foundations shall be laid, thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, &c.*"

What audacity of church, and priestly ignorance, it is to impose this book upon the world, as the writing of Isaiah! when Isaiah, according to their own chronology, died soon after the death of Hezekiah, which was six hundred and ninety

ninety-eight years before Christ; and the decree of Cyrus, in favour of the Jews returning to Jerusalem, was, according to the same chronology, 536 years before Christ: which is a distance of time, between the two, of one hundred and sixty-two years. I do not suppose, that the compilers of the Bible made these books; but rather that they picked up some loose, anonymous essays, and put them together, under the names of such authors, as best suited their purpose. They have encouraged the imposition, which is next to inventing it; for it was impossible but they must have observed it.

When we see the studied craft of the scripture-makers, in making every part of this romantic book of school-boy's eloquence, bend to the monstrous idea of a Son of God, begotten by a ghost on the body of a virgin, there is no imposition; we are not justified in suspecting them of. Every phrase and circumstance are marked with the barbarous hand of superstitious torture, and forced into meanings, it was impossible they could have. The head of every chapter, and the top of every page are blazoned with the names of Christ and the church; that the unwary reader might suck in the error before he began to read.

Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, Isaiah, chap. vii. ver. 14, has been interpreted to mean the person called Jesus Christ, and his mother Mary, and has been echoed through christendom for more than a thousand years; and such has been the rage of this opinion, that scarcely a spot in it but has been stained with blood, and marked with desolation, in consequence of it. Though it is not my intention to enter into controversy on subjects of this kind, but to confine myself to shew that the Bible is spurious; and thus, by taking away the foundation, to overthrow at once the whole structure of superstition raised thereon; I will, however, stop a moment to expose the fallacious application of this passage.

Whether Isaiah was playing a trick with Ahaz, king of Judah, to whom this passage is spoken, is no business of mine; I mean only to shew the misapplication of the passage, and that it has no more reference to Christ and his mother, than it has to me and my mother. The story is simply this:

The king of Syria and the king of Israel (I have already mentioned, that the Jews were split into two nations, one of which was called Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem, and the other Israel) made war jointly against Ahaz, king of Judah, and marched their armies towards Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed, and the account says, ver. 2, "*Their hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*"

In this situation of things, *Isaiah* addresses himself to *Ahaz*, and assures him in the *name of the Lord*, (the *great* phrase of all the prophets,) that these two kings should not succeed against him; and to satisfy *Ahaz* that this should be the case, tells him to ask a sign. This, the account says, *Ahaz* declined doing giving as a reason, that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which, *Isaiah*, who is the speaker, says, ver. 14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, *behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*; and the 16th verse says, "And before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land which thou abhorrest or darest (meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel) shall be forsaken of both her kings." Here then was the sign, and the time limited for the completion of the assurance or promise, namely, before this child should know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Isaiah having committed himself thus far, it became necessary to him, in order to avoid the imputation of being a false prophet, and the consequences thereof, to take measures to make this sign appear. It certainly was not a difficult thing, in any time of the world, to find a girl with child, or to make her so; and perhaps, *Isaiah* knew of one before-hand; for I do not suppose that the prophets of that day were any more to be trusted, than the priests of this: be that however as it may, he says in the next chapter, ver. 2, "And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, *Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, and I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son.*"

Here then is the whole story, foolish as it is, of this child, and this virgin; and it is upon the barefaced perversion of this story, that the book of *Matthew*, and the impudence, and fordid interest of priests in later times, have founded a theory, which they call the gospel, and have applied this story to signify the person they call *Jesus Christ*; begotten, they say, by a ghost, whom they call holy, on the body of a woman, engaged in marriage, and afterwards married, whom they call a virgin seven hundred years after this foolish story was told; a theory, which, speaking for myself, I hesitate not to believe, and to say, is as fabulous, and as false as God is true*.

But to shew the imposition and falshood of *Isaiah*, we have only to attend to the sequel of this story; which, though it is passed over in silence in the book of *Isaiah*, is related in the 28th chapter of 2 *Chronicles*; and which is, that instead of

* In the 14th verse of the viith chapter, it is said, that the child should be called *Immanuel*; but this name was not given to either of the children, otherwise than as a character, which the word signifies. That of the prophetess was called *Miccer-balal-haba-baz*, and that of Mary was called *Jesus*.

these two kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, king of Judah, as Isaiah had pretended to foretel in the name of the Lord, they *succeeded*; Ahaz was defeated and destroyed; an hundred and twenty thousand of his people were slaughtered; Jerusalem was plundered, and two hundred thousand women, and sons and daughters, carried into captivity. Thus much for this lying prophet and imposter Isaiah, and the book of falsehoods that bears his name. I pass on to the book of

Jeremiah. This prophet, as he is called, lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, in the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah; and the suspicion was strong against him, that he was a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar. Every thing relating to Jeremiah shews him to have been a man of an equivocal character; in his metaphor of the potter and the clay, chap xviii. he guards his prognostications in such a crafty manner, as always to leave himself a door to escape by, in case the event should be contrary to what he had predicted.

In the 7th and 8th verses of that chapter, he makes the Almighty to say, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent me of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Here was a proviso against one side of the case: now for the other side.

Verse 9 and 10, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice; then *I will repent me of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.*" Here is a proviso against the other side; and according to this plan of prophesying, a prophet could never be wrong, however mistaken the Almighty might be. This sort of absurd subterfuge, and this manner of speaking of the Almighty, as one would speak of a man, is consistent with nothing but the stupidity of the Bible.

As to the authenticity of the book, it is only necessary to read it in order to decide positively, that, though some passages recorded therein may have been spoken by Jeremiah, he is not the author of the book. The historical parts, if they can be called by that name, are in the most confused condition; the same events are several times repeated, and that in a manner different, and sometimes in contradiction to each other; and this disorder runs even to the last chapter, where the history upon which the greater part of the book has been employed, begins a-new, and ends abruptly. The book has all the appearance of being a medley of unconnected anecdotes, respecting persons

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and things of that time, collected together in the same rude manner, as if the various and contradictory accounts, that are to be found in a bundle of newspapers, respecting persons and things of the present day, were put together without date, order, or explanation. I will give two or three examples of this kind.

It appears from the account of the 37th chapter, that the army of Nebuchadnezzar, which is called the army of the Chaldeans, had besieged Jerusalem some time; and on their hearing that the army of Pharaoh, of Egypt, was marching against them they raised the siege, and retreated for a time. It may here be proper to mention, in order to understand this confused history, that Nebuchadnezzar had besieged and taken Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoiakim, the predecessor of Zedekiah; and that it was Nebuchadnezzar who had made Zedekiah king, or rather vice-roy; and that this second siege, of which the book of Jeremiah treats, was in consequence of the revolt of Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar. This will, in some measure, account for the suspicion that affixes itself to Jeremiah, of being a traitor, and in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar; whom Jeremiah calls in the 43d chapter, ver. 10, the servant of God.

The 11th verse of this chapter (the 37th) says, "And it came to pass, that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem, for fear of Pharaoh's army, that Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem, to go (as this account states) into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people; and when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, *Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans*: then Jeremiah said, *It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans*. Jeremiah being thus stopt and accused, was, after being examined, committed to prison, on suspicion of being a traitor, where he remained, as is stated in the last verse of this chapter.

But the next chapter gives an account of the imprisonment of Jeremiah, which has no connection with *this* account; but ascribes his imprisonment to another circumstance, and for which we must go back to the 21st chapter. It is there stated, verse 1, that Zedekiah sent Pashur, the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the priest, to Jeremiah to enquire of him concerning Nebuchadnezzar, whose army was then before Jerusalem: and Jeremiah said to them, verse 8, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death: he that abideth in this city, shall die by the sword and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but

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he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live; and his life shall be unto him for a prey."

This interview and conference breaks off abruptly at the end of the 10th verse of the 21st chapter; and such is the disorder of this book, that we have to pass over sixteen chapters upon various subjects, in order to come at the continuation and event of this conference; and this brings us to the 1st verse of the 38th chapter, as I have just mentioned.

The 38th chapter opens with saying, "Then Shephatiah, the son of Mattan; and Gedaliah, the son of Pashur; and Jucal, the son of Shelemiah; and Pashur, the son of Melchiah; (here are more persons mentioned than in the 21st chapter) heard the words that Jeremiah spoke unto the people, saying, "*Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city, shall die by the sword, by famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans, shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live;*" (which are the words of the conference;) therefore, (say they to Zedekiah,) We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; *for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of the people, but the hurt:*" and at the 6th verse, it is said, "Then they took Jeremiah, and put him into the dungeon of Melchiah."

These two accounts are different and contradictory. The one ascribes his imprisonment to his attempt to *escape out of the city*; the other, to his *preaching and prophesying in the city*: the one to his being seized by the guard at the gate; the other, to his being accused before Zedekiah, by the conferees*.

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* I observed two chapters, 16th and 17th, in the first book of Samuel, that contradict each other with respect to David, and the manner he became acquainted with Saul; as the 37th and 38th chapters of the book of Jeremiah contradict each other with respect to the cause of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

In the 16th chapter of Samuel, it is said, that an evil spirit of God troubled Saul, and that his servants advised him (as a remedy) "to seek out a man, who was a cunning player upon the harp:" and Saul said, verse 17, "Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of his servants and said, Behold I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him: wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, "Send me David, thy son. And (verse 21) David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer; and when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, (verse 23) David took his harp, and played with his hand, and Saul was refreshed, and was well."

But the next chapter (17th) gives an account, all different to this, of the manner that Saul and David became acquainted: Here it is ascribed to David's encounter with Goliath, when David was sent by his father to carry provision to his brethren in the camp. In the 55th verse of this chapter, it is said "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine (Goliath), he said to Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said inquire thou whose son the stripling is.

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In the next chapter (the 39th) we have another instance of the disordered state of this book; for notwithstanding the siege of the city, by Nebuchadnezzar, has been the subject of several of the preceding chapters, particularly the 37th and 38th, the 39th chapter begins as if not a word had been said upon the subject; and as the reader was still to be informed of every particular respecting it; for it begins with saying, verse 1st, "*In the ninth year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army against Jerusalem, and besieged it, &c. &c.*"

But the instance in the last chapter (the 52) is still more glaring; for though the story has been told over and over again, this chapter still supposes the reader not to know any thing of it; for it begins by saying, verse 1st, *Zedekiah was one and twenty years old, when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah, of Libnath. (Ver 4.) and it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it, &c. &c.*

It is not possible that any one man, and more particularly Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. The errors are such, as could not have been committed by any person sitting down to compose a work. Were I, or any other man, to write in such a disordered manner, no body would read what was written; and every body would suppose that the writer was in a state of insanity. The only way therefore to account for the disorder is, that the book is a medley of detached unauthenticated anecdotes, put together by some stupid book-maker, under the name of Jeremiah; because many of them refer to him, and to the circumstances of the times he lived in.

Of the duplicity, and of the false predictions of Jeremiah, I shall mention two instances; and then proceed to review the remainder of the Bible.

It appears from the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him; and at this interview, which was private, Jeremiah pressed it strongly on Zedekiah to surrender himself to the enemy. "*If,*" says he, verse 17, *thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then*

And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand; and Saul said unto him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite. These two accounts belie each other, because each of them supposes Saul and David not to have known each other before. This book, the Bible, is too ridiculous even for criticism.

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thy soul shall live, &c." Zedekiah was apprehensive, that what passed at this conference should be known; and he said to Jeremiah, verse 25, "If the prince's (meaning those of Judah) hear, that I have talked with thee; and they come unto thee and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; and also what the king said unto thee: then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king; that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. Then came all the prince's unto Jeremiah, and asked him; and *he told them according to all the words the king had commanded.*" Thus, this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate, when he supposed it would answer his purpose: for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah, to make this supplication; neither did he make it: he went, because he was sent for; and he employed that opportunity, to advise Zedekiah to surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.

In the 34th chapter is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words, ver. 2. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon; and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. *Yet hear the word of the Lord; O Zedekiah, king of Judah, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings that were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee, and they will lament thee, saying, Ah, Lord; for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.*"

Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odours, as at the funeral of his fathers (as Jeremiah had declared, the Lord himself had pronounced), the reverse, according to the 52d chapter, was the case: it is there said, ver. 10, "That the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." What then can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?

As for Jeremiah, he experienced none of those evils. He was taken into favour by Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him in charge to the captain of the guard, chap. xxxix. ver. 12, "Take him (said he), and look well to him, and do him no

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harm ; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah joined himself afterwards to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him against the Egyptians, who had marched to the relief of Jerusalem while it was besieged. Thus much for another of the lying prophets, and the book that bears his name.

I have been the more particular in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah, because those two are spoken of in the books of Kings and of Chronicles, which the others are not. The remainder of the books ascribed to the men called prophets, I shall not trouble myself much about, but take them collectively into the observations I shall offer on the character of the men stiled prophets.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have said that the word prophet was the Bible-word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet. I have also said, that the word signified a performer upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances ; such as that of a company of prophets, prophesying with psalteries, with tabrets, with pipes, with harps, &c. and that Saul prophesied with them, 1 Sam. chap. x. ver. 5. It appears from this passage, and from other parts in the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music ; for the person, who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things, was not a prophet, but a *seer**, 1 Sam. chap. ix. ver. 9 ; and it was not till after the word *seer* went out of use, (which most probably was, when Saul banished those he called wizards), that the profession of the seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the *modern* meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time ; and it became necessary to the inventors of the gospel to give it this latitude of meaning, in order to apply, or to stretch what they call the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the times of the New. But according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterwards of the prophet, so

* I know not what is the Hebrew word that corresponds to the word seer in English ; but I observe it is translated into French by *La Voyant*, from the verb *voir* to see, and which means the person who sees, or the seer.

far as the meaning of the word seer was incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very closely connected with it; such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprize they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in; all of which had immediate reference to themselves, (as in the case already mentioned of Ahaz and Isaiah with respect to the expression, (*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,*) and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying, that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling; such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, &c. and it is the fraud of the Christian church, not that of the Jews, and the ignorance and the superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated those poetical — musical — conjuring — dreaming — strolling gentry, into the rank they have since had.

But besides this general character of all the prophets, they had also a particular character. They were in parties, and they prophesied for, or against, according to the party they were with, as the poetical and political writers of the present day write in defence of the party they associate with, against the other.

After the Jews were divided into two nations, that of Judah and that of Israel, each party had it's prophets, who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, &c.

The prophets of the party of Judah prophesied against the prophets of the party of Israel; and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This party prophesying shewed itself immediately on the separation under the first two rival kings Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed, or prophesied against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel, was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was way-laid on his return home by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him, (1 Kings, chap. x,) "*Art thou the man of God that came from Judah?*" and he said, *I am.*" Then the prophet of the party of Israel said to him, "*I am a prophet also as thou art, (signifying of Judah) and an Angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee unto thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water: but, says the 18th verse, he lied unto him.*" The event, however, according to the story, is, that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah; for he was found dead on the road by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who no doubt was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In the third chapter of the second of kings, a story is related of prophesying, or conjuring, that shews, in several particulars, the character of a prophet. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Joram king of Israel, had for a while ceased their party animosity, and entered into an alliance; and those two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting, and marching their armies, the story says, they were in great distress for water, upon which Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? and one of the servants of the king of Israel said, here is Elisha.* (Elisha was of the party of Judah.) *And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah said, The word of the Lord is with him.*" The story then says, that these three kings went down to Elisha; and when Elisha (who, as I have said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "*What have I to do with thee, get thee to the prophets of thy father, and the prophets of thy mother. Nay, but said the king of Israel, the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of the king of Moab,*" (meaning, because of the distress they were in for water); upon which Elisha said, "*As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee.*" Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet. We have now to see the performance or manner of prophesying.

Ver. 15, *Bring me,* said Elisha, *a minstrel; and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.*" Here is the farce of the conjurer. Now for the prophecy: "*And Elisha said,* (singing, most probably, to the tune he was playing,) *Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches,*" which was just telling them what every countryman could have told them, without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.

But as every conjuror is not famous alike for the same thing, so neither were those prophets; for though all of them at least those I have spoken of, were famous for lying, some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha, whom I have just mentioned, was a chief in this branch of prophesying: it was he that cursed the forty-two children in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that those children were of the party of Israel; but as those who will curse will lie, there is just as much credit to be given to this story of Elisha's two she-bears, as there is to that of the dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said,

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Poor children three devoured he,
That could not with him grapple;
And at one sup he eat them up,
As a man would eat an apple.

There were another description of men called prophets, that amused themselves with dreams and visions; but whether by night or by day we know not. These, if they were not quite harmless, were but little mischievous. Of this class are

EZEKIEL and DANIEL; and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others, is, Are they genuine? that is, were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof; but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were, than that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follow: First, Because those books do not contain internal evidence, to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c. &c. prove they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c. &c.

Secondly, Because they were not written till after the Babylonish captivity began; and there is good reason to believe, that not any book in the bible was written before that period: at least it is proveable, from the books themselves, as I have already shewn, that they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, Because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written, agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests, who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would greatly have improved their intellects, in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have saved them the trouble of racking their invention, as they have done to no purpose; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write, respecting their own affairs, or those of their friends, or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest; for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions; and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in, as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretend to have dreamed dreams, and seen visions, because it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought, however, to suppose,

pose, that the persons to whom they wrote understood what they meant, and that it was not intended any body else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Babylon, under the first captivity, in the time of Jehoiakim, nine years before the second captivity in the time of Zedekiah. The Jews were then still numerous, and had considerable force at Jerusalem; and as it is natural to suppose, that men in the situation of Ezekiel and Daniel, would be meditating the recovery of their country, and their own deliverance, it is reasonable to suppose, that the accounts of dreams and visions, with which these books are filled, are no other than a disguised mode of correspondence, to facilitate those objects: it served them as a cypher or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or at least a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisomeness of captivity: but the presumption is, they are the former.

Ezekiel begins his book, by speaking of a vision of *cherubims* and of a vision of a *wheel within a wheel*, which he says he saw by the river Chebar, in the land of his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that by the cherubims he meant the temple at Jerusalem, where they had figures of cherubims? and by a wheel within a wheel, (which as a figure, has always been understood to signify political contrivance,) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of his book, he supposes himself transported to Jerusalem, and into the temple; and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says chap. xliii. ver 3. that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar; which indicates, that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances, as far remote even as the present day, it shews the fraud, or the extreme folly, to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarcely any thing can be more absurd, than to suppose, that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was over-run, and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely any thing, I say, can be more absurd than to suppose, that such men should find nothing
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to do, but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand, or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time nothing more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem, and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writing contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books being forced by necessity, and not adopted by choice, is not irrational; but if we are to use the books as prophecies, they are false. In the 29th chapter of Ezekiel, speaking of Egypt, it is said, ver. 11. "*No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited for forty years*" This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have spoken of Jonah, and of the story of him and the whale. A fit story for ridicule, if it was written to be believed; or of laughter, if it was intended to try what credulity could swallow; for if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow any thing.

But, as is already shewn in the observations on the book of Job and of Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the Bible, are originally Hebrew, or only translations from books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles, than of the Jews; and that it has been written as a fable, to expose the nonsense, and satyze the vicious and malignant character of a Bible-prophet, or a predicting priest.

Jonah is represented, first, as a disobedient prophet, running away from his mission, and taking shelter aboard a vessel of the Gentiles, bound from Joppa to Tarshish; as if he ignorantly supposed, by such a paltry contrivance, he could hide himself, where God could not find him. The vessel is overtaken by a storm at sea; and the mariners all of whom are Gentiles, believing it to be a judgment, on account of some one on board who had committed a crime, agreed to cast lots, to discover the offender, and the lot fell upon Jonah. But, before this, they had cast all their wares and merchandize over-board, to lighten the vessel, while Jonah, like a stupid fellow, was fast asleep in the hold.

After the lot had designated Jonah to be the offender, they questioned him to know who, and what he was? and he told them *he was an Hebrew*; and the story implies, that he confessed himself

himself to be guilty. But these Gentiles, instead of sacrificing him at once, without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible-prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case; and as it is related, Samuel had done by Agag, and Moses by the women and children; they endeavoured to save him, though at the risk of their own lives: for the account says, "*Nevertheless* (that is, though Jonah was a Jew, and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes, and the loss of their cargo,) *the men rowed hard to bring the boat to land, but they could not, for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.*" Still, however, they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution, and they cried, says the account, unto the Lord, saying, "*We beseech thee, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.*" Meaning thereby, that they did not presume to judge Jonah guilty, since that he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen upon him as a decree of God, or as it *pleased God*. The address of this prayer shews that the Gentiles worshipped *one Supreme Being*, and that they were not idolaters, as the Jews represented them to be. But the storm still continuing, and the danger encreasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea; where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive!

We have now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made-up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without connection or consistency, and adapted to the distress, but not at all to the condition that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however, is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on, (taking-off, at the same time the cant language of a Bible-prophet,) saying, "*The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land.*"

Jonah then received a second mission to Nineveh, with which he sets out; and we have now to consider him as a preacher. The distress he is represented to have suffered, the remembrance of his own disobedience as the cause of it, and the miraculous escape he is supposed to have had, were sufficient; one would conceive, to have impressed him with sympathy and benevolence in the execution of his mission; but instead of this, he enters the city with a denunciation and malediction

malediction in his mouth, crying, "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*"

We have now to consider this supposed missionary in the last act of his mission; and here it is that the malevolent spirit of a Bible-prophet, or of a predicting priest, appears in all that blackness of character, that men ascribe to the being they call the devil.

Having published his predictions, he withdrew, says the story, to the east side of the city.—But for what? not to contemplate in retirement the mercy of his Creator to himself, or to others, but to wait, with malignant impatience, the destruction of Nineveh. It came to pass, however, as the story relates, that the Ninevites reformed, and that God, according to the Bible phrase, repented him of the evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. This, saith the first verse of the last chapter, *displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.* His obdurate heart would rather that all Nineveh should be destroyed, and every soul, young and old, perish in its ruins than that his prediction should not be fulfilled. To expose the character of a prophet still more, a gourd is made to grow up in the night, that promises him an agreeable shelter from the heat of the sun, in the place to which he is retired; and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becomes excessive, and he is ready to destroy himself. "*It is better said he, for me to die than to live.*" This brings on a supposed expostulation between the Almighty and the prophet; in which the former says, "*Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? And Jonah said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it to grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than three-score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?*"

Here is both the winding up of the satire, and the moral of the fable. As a satire it strikes against the character of all the Bible-prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children, with which this lying book the bible is crowded; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to suckling infants, and women with child, because the same reflection, *that there are more than three-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand, and their left,* meaning young children: applies to all their cases. It satirizes also the supposed partiality of the Creator for one nation more than for another.

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As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes inclined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right, hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction, or fees with disappointment, the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgments, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the stranger, ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecutions. Thus much for the book of Jonah.

Of the poetical parts of the Bible, that are called prophecies, I have spoken in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, and already in this; where I have said that the word prophet is the Bible-word for poet; and that the flights and metaphors of those poets, many of which are become obscure by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances have been ridiculously erected into things, called prophecies, and applied to purposes the writers never thought of. When a priest quotes any of those passages, he unriddles it agreeably to his own views, and imposes that explanation upon his congregation as the meaning of the writer. The *whore of Babylon* has been the common whore of all the priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the strumpet: so well do they agree in their explanations.

There now remains only a few books, which they call the books of the lesser prophets; and as I have already shewn that the greater are imposters, it would be cowardice to disturb the repose of the little ones. Let them sleep then, in the arms of their nurses, the priests, and both be forgotten together.

I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow.—I pass on to the books of the New Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophecies of the Old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation.

As it is nothing extraordinary that a women should be with child before she was married, and that the son she might bring forth

forth should be executed, even unjustly; I see no reason for not believing that such a woman as Mary, and such a man as Joseph, and Jesus existed; their mere existence is a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground, either to believe, or to disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of, *It may be so; and what then?* The probability, however, is, that there were such persons, or at least such as resembled them in part of the circumstances, because almost all romantic stories have been suggested by some actual circumstance; as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk.

It is not then the existence, or the non-existence, of the persons that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend. The story, taking it as it is told, is blasphemously obscene. It gives an account of a young woman engaged to be married, and while under this engagement she is, to speak plain language, debauched by a ghost, under the impious pretence, (Luke, chap. i. ver. 35,) that "*the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee*" Notwithstanding which Joseph afterwards marries her, cohabits with her as his wife, and in his turn rivals the ghost. This is putting the story into intelligible language, and when told in this manner, there is not a priest but must be ashamed to own it*.

Obscenity in matters of faith, however wrapped up, is always a token of fable and imposture; for it is necessary to our serious belief in God, that we do not connect it with stories that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpretations. This story is, upon the face of it, the same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda, or Jupiter and Europa, or any of the amorous adventures of Jupiter; and shews, as is already stated in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, that the Christian faith is built upon the heathen mythology.

As the historical parts of the New Testament, so far as concerns Jesus Christ, are confined to a very short space of time, less than two years, and all within the same country, and nearly to the same spot, the discordance of time, place, and circumstance, which detects the fallacy of the books of the Old Testament, and proves them to be impositions, cannot be expected to be found here in the same abundance. The New Testament, compared with the Old, is like a farce of one act

* Mary, the supposed virgin mother of Jesus, had several other children, sons and daughters. See Matt. chap. xiii. ver. 55, 56.

in which there is not room for very numerous violations of the unities. There are, however, some glaring contradictions, which, exclusive of the fallacy of the pretended prophecies, are sufficient to shew the story of Jesus Christ to be false.

I lay it down as a position which cannot be controverted, first, that the *agreement* of all the parts of a story does not prove that story to be true, because the parts may agree, and the whole may be false; secondly, that the *disagreement* of the parts of a story proves *the whole cannot be true*. The agreement does not prove truth, but the disagreement proves falshood positively.

The history of Jesus Christ is contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The first chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jesus Christ; and in the third chapter of Luke, there is also given a genealogy of Jesus Christ. Did these two agree, it would not prove the genealogy to be true, because it might, nevertheless be a fabrication; but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falshood absolutely. If Matthew speak truth, Luke speaks falshood; and if Luke speak truth, Matthew speaks falshood: and as there is no authority for believing one more than the other, there is no authority for believing either; and if they cannot be believed, even in the very first thing they say, and set out to prove, they are not entitled to be believed in any thing they say afterwards. Truth is an uniform thing; and as to inspiration and revelation, were we to admit it, it is impossible to suppose it can be contradictory. Either then the men called apostles were imposters, or the books ascribed to them have been written by other persons, and fathered upon them, as is the case in the Old Testament.

The book of Matthew gives, chap. i. ver. 6, a genealogy by name from David, up, through Joseph, the husband of Mary, to Christ; and makes there to be *twenty-eight* generations. The book of Luke gives also a genealogy by name from Christ, through Joseph the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes there to be *forty-three* generations; besides which, there is only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. I here insert both genealogical lists, and for the sake of perspicuity and comparison, have placed them both in the same direction, that is, from Joseph down to David.

Genealogy according to
Matthew.

Christ.

2 Joseph

Genealogy according to
Luke.

Christ.

2 Joseph

Genealogy

Genealogy, according to
Matthew.

- 3 Jacob
- 4 Matthan
- 5 Eleazer
- 6 Eliud
- 7 Achim
- 8 Sadoc
- 9 Azor
- 10 Eliakim
- 11 Abiud
- 12 Zorobabel
- 13 Salathiel
- 14 Jechonias
- 15 Josias
- 16 Amon
- 17 Manaffes
- 18 Ezekias
- 19 Achaz
- 20 Joatham
- 21 Ozias
- 22 Joram
- 23 Josaphat
- 24 Afa
- 25 Abia
- 26 Roboam
- 27 Solomon
- 28 David *

Genealogy, according to
Luke.

- 3 Heli
- 4 Matthat
- 5 Levi
- 6 Melchi
- 7 Janna
- 8 Joseph
- 9 Mattathias
- 10 Amos
- 11 Naum
- 12 Eli
- 13 Nagge
- 14 Maath
- 15 Mattathias
- 16 Semei
- 17 Joseph
- 18 Juda
- 19 Joanna
- 20 Rhesa
- 21 Zorobabel
- 22 Salathiel
- 23 Neri
- 24 Melchi
- 25 Addi
- 26 Cosam
- 27 Elmodam
- 28 Er
- 29 Jose
- 30 Eliezer
- 31 Jorim
- 32 Matthat
- 33 Levi
- 34 Simeon
- 35 Juda
- 36 Joseph
- 37 Jonan
- 38 Eliakim
- 39 Melea
- 40 Menan
- 41 Mattatha
- 42 Nathan
- 43 David

Now,

† From the birth of David to the birth of Christ is upwards of 1080 years; as the life-time of Christ is not included, there are but 27 full generations,

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Now, if these men, Matthew and Luke, set out with a falsehood between them (as these two accounts shew they do) in the very commencement of their history of Jesus Christ, and of who, and of what he was, what authority (as I have before asked) is there left for believing the strange things they tell us afterwards? If they cannot be believed in their account of his natural genealogy, how are we to believe them, when they tell us, he was the son of God, begotten by a ghost; and that an angel announced this in secret to his mother? If they lied in one genealogy, why are we to believe them in the other? If his natural genealogy be manufactured, which it certainly is, why are we not to suppose, that his celestial genealogy is manufactured also; and that the whole is fabulous? Can any man of serious reflection hazard his future happiness upon the belief of a story naturally impossible; repugnant to every idea of decency; and related by persons already detected of falsehood? Is it not more safe, that we stop ourselves at the plain, pure, and unmixed belief of one God, which is deism, than that we commit ourselves on an ocean of improbable, irrational, indecent, and contradictory tales?

The first question, however, upon the books of the New Testament, as upon those of the Old, is, are they genuine? were they written by the persons to whom they are ascribed? for it is upon this ground only, that the strange things related therein have been credited. Upon this point, there is no *direct proof, for, or against*; and all that this state of a case proves, is *doubtfulness*; and doubtfulness is the opposite of belief. The state, therefore, that the books are in, proves against themselves as far as this kind of proof can go.

But, exclusive of this, the presumption is, that the books called the Evangelists, and ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and that they are impositions. The disordered state of the history in these four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies, that they are the productions of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pre-

To find therefore the average age of each person mentioned in the list at the time his first son was born, it is only necessary to divide 1080 by 27, which gives 40 years for each person. As the life-time of man was then but of the same extent it is now it is an absurdity to suppose that 27 following generations should all be old bachelors before, they married! and the more so when we are told that Solomon, the next in succession to David, had a house full of Wives and Mistresses, before he was 21 Years of Age. So far from this genealogy being a solemn truth it is not even a reasonable lie. The list of Luke gives about 26 years for the average age, and this is too much.

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tend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men called apostles are supposed to have done: in fine, that they have been manufactured, as the books of the Old Testament have been, by other persons, than those, whose names they bear.

The story of the angel, announcing, what the church calls the *immaculate conception*, is not so much as mentioned in the books ascribed to Mark, and John; and is differently related in Matthew and Luke. The former says, the angel appeared to Joseph; the latter says, it was to Mary; but either Joseph or Mary was the worst evidence that could have been thought of; for it was others that should have testified *for them*, and not they for themselves. Were any girl that is now with child to say, and even to swear it, that she was gotten with child by a ghost, and that an angel told her so, would she be believed? Certainly she would not. Why then are we to believe the same thing of another girl whom we never saw, told by nobody knows who, nor when, nor where? How strange and inconsistent is it, that the same circumstances that would weaken the belief even of a probable story, should be given as a motive for believing this one that has, upon the face of it, every token of absolute impossibility, and imposture.

The story of Herod destroying all the children under two years old, belongs altogether to the writer of the book of Matthew: not one of the rest mentions any thing about it. Had such a circumstance been true, the universality of it must have made it known to all the writers; and the thing would have been too striking, to have been omitted by any. This writer tells us, that Jesus escaped this slaughter, because Joseph and Mary were warned by an angel, to flee with him into Egypt; but he forgot to make provision for John, who was then under two years of age. John, however, who staid behind, fared as well as Jesus, who fled; and therefore the story circumstantially belies itself.

Not any two of those writers agree in reciting, *exactly in the same words*, the written inscription, short as it is, which they tell us, was put over Christ when he was crucified: and besides this, Mark says, He was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning) and John says, it was the sixth hour (twelve at noon*.)

* According to John, the sentence was not passed till about the sixth hour (noon) and consequently, the execution could not be till the afternoon; but Mark says expressly, that he was crucified at the third hour, (nine in the morning) chap. xv. ver. 25. John, chap. xix. ver. 14.

The inscription is thus stated in those books.

Matthew——This is Jesus the king of the Jews.

Mark —— The king of the Jews.

Luke —— This is the king of the Jews.

John —— Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene. The only one of the men, called apostles, who appears to have been near to the spot, was Peter; and when he was accused of being one of Jesus's followers, it is said (Matthew, chap. xxvi. ver. 74,) "*Then Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man:*" yet we are now called upon to believe the same Peter, convicted, by their own account, of perjury. For what reason, or on what authority, should we do this?

The accounts that are given of the circumstances, that they tell us attended the crucifixion, are differently related in those four books.

The book ascribed to Matthew says, "*There was darkness over all the land, from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour—that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom—that there was an earthquake—that the rocks rent—that the graves opened, that the bodies of many of the saints that slept, arose, and came out of their graves after the resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*" Such is the account which this dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives; but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.

The writer of the book ascribed to Mark, in detailing the circumstances of the crucifixion, makes no mention of any earthquake, nor of the rocks rending, nor of the graves opening, nor of the dead men walking out. The writer of the book of Luke is silent also upon the same points. And as to the writer of the book of John, though he details all the circumstances of the crucifixion down to the burial of Christ, he says nothing about either the darkness—the veil of the temple—the earthquake—the rocks—the graves—nor the dead men.

Now if it had been true, that these things had happened; and if the writers of these books had lived at the time they did happen, and had been the persons they are said to be, namely the four men called apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it was not possible for them, as true historians, even without the aid of inspiration, not to have recorded them. The things supposing them to have been facts, were of too much notoriety not to have been known, and of too much importance not to have been told. All these supposed apostles must have been
witnesses

witnesses of the earthquake, if there had been any ; for it was not possible for them to have been absent from it ; the opening of the graves, and the resurrection of the dead men, and their walking about the city, is of still greater importance than the earthquake. An earthquake is always possible, and natural, and proves nothing ; but this opening of the graves is supernatural, and directly in point to their doctrine, their cause, and their apostleship. Had it been true, it would have filled up whole chapters of those books, and been the chosen theme, and general chorus of all the writers ; but instead of this, little and trivial things, and mere prattling conversation of, *he said this*, and *she said that*, are often tediously detailed, while this most important of all, had it been true, is passed off in a slovenly manner, by a single dash of the pen, and that by one writer only, and not so much as hinted at by the rest.

It is an easy thing to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support the lie after it is told. The writer of the book of Matthew should have told us who the saints were that came to life again, and went into the city, and what became of them afterwards, and who it was that saw them ; for he is not hardy enough to say that he saw them himself ;—whether they came out naked, and all in natural buff, he-saints and she-saints ; or whether they came full dressed, and where they got their dresses ; whether they went to their former habitations, and reclaimed their wives, their husbands, and their property, and how they were received ; whether they entered ejectments for the recovery of their possessions, or brought actions of *crim. con.* against the rival interlopers ; whether they remained on earth, and followed their former occupation of preaching or working ; or whether they died again, or went back to their graves alive, and buried themselves.

Strange indeed, that an army of saints should return to life, and no body know who they were, nor who it was that saw them, and that not a word more should be said upon the subject, nor these saints have any thing to tell us ! Had it been the prophets who (as we are told) had formerly prophesied of these things, *they* must have had a great deal to say. They could have told us every thing, and we should have had posthumous prophecies, with notes and commentaries upon the first, a little better at least than we have now. Had it been Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, not an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jerusalem. Had it been John the Baptist, and the saints of the times then present, every body would have known them, and they would have out-preached and out-famed all the other apostles. But instead of this, these saints are made to pop up, like Jonah's gourd in the night, for no purpose at all, but to wither in the morning. Thus much for this part of the story.

The tale of the resurrection follows that of the crucifixion ; and in this, as well as in that, the writers, whoever they were, disagree so much, as to make it evident that none of them were there.

The book of Matthew states, that when Christ was put in the sepulchre, the Jews applied to Pilate for a watch or a guard to be placed over the sepulchre, to prevent the body being stolen by the disciples ; and that, in consequence of this request, the sepulchre *was made sure, sealing the stone* that covered the mouth, and setting a watch. But the other books say nothing about this application, nor about the sealing, nor the guard, nor the watch ; and according to their accounts, there were none. Matthew, however, follows up this part of the story of the guard or the watch with a second part, that I shall notice in the conclusion, as it serves to detect the fallacy of those books.

The book of Matthew continues its account, and says, (chap. xxviii. ver. 1,) that, at the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn, towards the first day of the week, came *Mary Magdalene* and the *other Mary*, to see the sepulchre. Mark says it was sun-rising, and John says it was dark. Luke says it was *Mary Magdalene*, and *Joanna*, and *Mary the mother of James*, and *other women*, that came to the sepulchre ; and John states, that *Mary Magdalene* came alone. So well do they agree about their first evidence ! they all, however, appear to have known most about *Mary Magdalene* ; she was a woman of a large acquaintance, and it was not an ill conjecture that she might be upon the stroll.

The book of Matthew goes on to say, (ver. 2,) “ And behold there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and *sat upon it*.” But the other books say nothing about any earthquake, nor about the angel rolling back the stone, and *sitting upon it* ; and according to their accounts, there was no angel *sitting there*, Mark says, the angel *was within the sepulchre, sitting* on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up ; and John says, they were both sitting down, one at the head, and the other at the feet.

Matthew says, that the angel that was sitting upon the stone on the outside of the sepulchre, told the two Marys that Christ was risen, and that the women went *away* quickly. Mark says, that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, and wondering at it, went *into* the sepulchre, and that it was the angel that was *sitting* within on the right side, that told them so. Luke says, it was the two angels that were standing up ; and

and John says, it was Jesus Christ himself that told it to Mary-Magdalene ; and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in.

Now if the writers of these four books had gone into a court of justice, to prove an *alibi*, (for it is of the nature of an *alibi* that is here attempted to be proved, namely, the absence of a dead body, by supernatural means,) and had they given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropt for perjury, and would have justly deserved it. Yet this is the evidence, and these are the books, that have been imposed upon the world, as being given by divine inspiration, and as the unchangeable word of God.

The writer of the book of Matthew, after giving this account, relates a story that is not to be found in any of the other books, and which is the same I have just before alluded to.

“ Now, says he, (that is, after the conversation the women had had with the angel sitting upon the stone,) behold some of the watch (meaning the watch that he had said had been placed over the sepulchre) came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done ; and when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we *slept* ; and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught ; and this saying (that his disciples stole him away) is commonly reported among the Jews *until this day*.”

The expression, *until this day*, is an evidence that the book ascribed to Matthew was not written by Matthew, and that it has been manufactured long after the times and things of which it pretends to treat ; for the expression implies a great length of intervening time. It would be inconsistent in us to speak in this manner of any thing happening in our own time. To give, therefore, intelligible meaning to the expression, we must suppose a lapse of some generations at least, for this manner of speaking carries the mind back to an ancient time.

The absurdity also of the story is worth noticing ; for it shews the writer of the book of Matthew to have been an exceeding weak and foolish man. He tells a story, that contradicts itself in point of possibility : for though the guard, if there were any, might be made to say that the body was taken away while they were *asleep*, and to give that as a reason for their not having presented it, that same sleep must also have prevented their knowing how, and by whom it was done ; and yet they are made to say, that it was the disciples who did it. Were a man to tender his evidence of something that he should say was

done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the person who did it, while he was asleep, and could know nothing of the matter, such evidence could not be received: it will do well enough for Testament evidence, but not for any thing where truth is concerned.

I come now to that part of the evidence in those books, that respects the pretended appearance of Christ after this pretended resurrection.

The writer of the book of Matthew relates, that the angel that was sitting on the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, said to the two Marys, chap. xxviii. ver. 7, "*Behold Christ is gone before you into Galilee, there ye shall see him; lo, I have told you.*" And the same writer, at the two next verses, (8, 9,) makes Christ himself to speak to the same purpose to these women, immediately after the angel had told it to them, and that they ran quickly to tell it to the disciples; and at the 16th Verse it is said, "*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; and when they saw him, they worshipped him.*"

But the writer of the book of John tells us a story very different to this; for he says, chap. xx. ver. 19, "*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, (that is, the same day that Christ is said to have risen,) when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them.*"

According to Matthew, the eleven were marching to Galilee, to meet Jesus in a mountain, by his own appointment, at the very time when, according to John, they were assembled in another place, and that not by appointment, but in secret, for fear of the Jews.

The writer of the book of Luke contradicts that of Matthew more pointedly than John does; for he says expressly, that the meeting was in *Jerusalem* the evening of the same day that he (Christ) rose, and that the *eleven* were *there*. See Luke, chap. xxiv. ver. 13, 33.

Now it is not possible, unless we admit these supposed disciples the right of wilful lying, that the writer of these books could be any of the eleven persons called disciples; for if, according to Matthew, the eleven went into Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment, on the same day that he is said to have risen, Luke and John must have been two of that eleven; yet the writer of Luke says expressly, and John implies as much, that the meeting was that same day, in a house in Jerusalem; and on the other hand if, according to Luke and John, the *eleven* were assembled in a house in Jerusalem, Matthew must have been one of that eleven; yet

Matthew

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The writer of the book of Mark says nothing about any meeting in Galilee; but he says, chap. xvi. ver. 12, that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared in *another form* to two of them, as they walked into the country, and that these two told it to the residue, who would not believe them. Luke also tells a story, in which he keeps Christ employed the whole of the day of this pretended resurrection, until the evening, and which totally invalidates the account of going to the mountain in Galilee. He says, that two of them, without saying which two, went that *same day* to a village called Emmaus, threescore furlongs (seven miles and a half) from Jerusalem, and that Christ in disguise went with them, and staid with them unto the evening, and supped with them, and then vanished out of their sight, and re-appeared that same evening, at the meeting of the eleven in Jerusalem.

This is the contradictory manner in which the evidence of this pretended re-appearance of Christ is stated; the only point in which the writer's agree, is the skulking privacy of that re-appearance; for whether it was in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, it was still skulking. To what cause then are we to assign this skulking? On the other hand, it is directly repugnant to the supposed or pretended end, that of convincing the world that Christ was risen; and on the other hand, to have asserted the publicity of it, would have exposed the writers of those books to public detection; and therefore they have been under the necessity of making it a private affair.

As to the account of Christ being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is Paul only who says it, and not the five hundred who say it for themselves. It is therefore the testimony but of one man, and that too of a man, who did not, according to the same account, believe a word of the matter himself, at the time it is said to have happened. His evidence, supposing him to have been the writer of the 15th chapter of Corinthians, where this account is given, is like that of a man, who comes into a court of justice to swear, that what he had sworn before is false. A man may often see reason, and he has too always the right of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.

I now come to the last scene, that of the ascension into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews, and of every thing else, must necessarily have been out of the question; it was that which, if true, was to seal the whole; and upon which the
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reality of the future mission of the disciples was to rest for proof. Words, whether declarations, or promises that passed in private, either in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, even supposing them to have been spoken, could not be evidence in public: it was therefore necessary that this last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute; and that it should be, as I have stated in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, as public and as visible, as the sun at noon day; at least, it ought to have been as public as the crucifixion is reported to have been. But to come to the point:

In the first place the writer of the book of Matthew does not say a syllable about it; neither does the writer of the book of John. This being the case, it is possible to suppose, that those writers, who affect to be even minute in other matters, would have been silent upon this, had it been true? The writer of the book of Mark passes it off in a careless, slovenly manner, with a single dash of the pen; as if he was tired of romancing, or ashamed of the story. So also does the writer of Luke. And even between these two, there is not an apparent agreement, as to the place where this final parting is said to have been.

THE BOOK OF MARK says, that Christ appeared to the eleven, as they sat at meat; alluding to the meeting of the eleven at Jerusalem: he then states the conversation, that he says passed at that meeting; and immediately after says, (as a school-boy would finish a dull story), "*So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*" But the writer of Luke says, that the ascension was from Bethany; that *he* (Christ) *led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them there, and was carried up into Heaven.* So also was Mahomet: and as to Moses, the apostle Jude says, ver. 9. *That Michael and the devil disputed about his body.* While we believe such fables as these, or either of them, we believe unworthy of the Almighty.

I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and when it is considered that the whole space of time, from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four, and that all the circumstances are reported to have happened, nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem, it is, I believe, impossible to find in any story upon record, so many, and such glaring absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods, as are in those books. They are more numerous and striking, than I had any expectation of finding when I began this examination, and far more so than I had any Idea of when I wrote the former part of the *Age of Reason*. I had then

then neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, nor could I procure any. My own situation, even as to existence, was becoming every day more precarious; and as I was willing to leave something behind me upon the subject, I was obliged to be quick and concise. The quotations I then made, were from memory only, but they are correct; and the opinions I have advanced in that work, are the effect of the most clear and long established conviction,—that the Bible and the Testament are impositions upon the world;—that the fall of man, the account of Jesus Christ being the Son of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath of God, and of salvation by that strange means, are all fabulous inventions, dishonourable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty;—that the only true religion is deism,, by which I then meant, and now mean, the belief of one God, and an imitation of his moral character, or the practise of what are called moral virtues;—and that it was upon this only (so far as religion is concerned) that I rested all my hopes of happiness hereafter. So say I now—and so help me God.

But to return to the subject.—Though it is impossible, at this distance of time, to ascertain as a fact, who were the writers of those four books (and this alone is sufficient to hold them in doubt, and where we doubt, we do not believe), it is not difficult to ascertain negatively, that they were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed. The contradictions in those books demonstrate two things;

First, that the writers cannot have been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the matters they relate, or they would have related them without those contradictions; and consequently that the books have not been written by the persons called apostles, who are supposed to have been witnesses of this kind.

Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were, have not acted in concerted imposition; but each writer, separately, and individually for himself, and without the knowledge of the other.

The same evidence that applies to prove the one, applies equally to prove both those cases; that is, that the books were not written by the men called apostles, and also that they are not a concerted imposition. As to inspiration, it is altogether out of the question; we may as well attempt to unite truth and falsehood, as inspiration and contradiction.

If four men are eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses to a scene; they will, without any concert between them, agree as to the time and place, when and where that scene happened. Their individual

individual knowledge of the *thing*, each one knowing it for himself, renders concert totally unnecessary; the one will not say it was in a mountain in the country, and the other at a house in town; the one will not say it was at sun-rise, and the other that it was dark. For in whatever place it was, and at whatever time it was, they know it equally alike.

And on the other hand, if four men concert a story, they will make their separate relations of that story agree and corroborate with each other to support the whole. *That* concert supplies the want of fact in the one case, as the knowledge of the fact supercedes in the other case, the necessity of a concert. The same contradictions, therefore, that prove there has been no concert, prove also, that the reporters had no knowledge of the fact, (or rather of that which they relate as a fact,) and detect also the falshood of their reports. Those books, therefore have neither been written by the men called apostles, nor by imposters in concert. How then have they been written?

I am not one of those who are fond of believing there is much of that which is called wilful lying, or lying originally, except in the case of men setting up to be prophets, as in the Old Testament; for prophesying is lying professionally. In almost all other cases, it is not difficult to discover the progress, by which even simple supposition, with the aid of credulity, will in time grow into a lie, and at last be told as a fact; and whenever we can find a charitable reason for a thing of this kind, we ought not to indulge a severe one.

The story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead, is the story of an apparition; such as timid imaginations can always create in vision, and credulity believe. Stories of this kind had been told of the assassination of Julius Cæsar, not many years before, and they generally have their origin in violent deaths, or in execution of innocent persons. In cases of this kind, compassion lends its aid, and benevolently stretches the story. It goes on a little and a little farther, till it becomes a *most certain truth*. Once start a ghost, and credulity fills up the history of its life, and assigns the cause of its appearance; one tells it one way, another another way, till there are as many stories about the ghost, and about the proprietor of the ghost, as there are about Jesus Christ in these four books.

The story of the appearance of Jesus Christ is told with that strange mixture of the natural and impossible, that distinguishes legendary tale from fact. He is represented as suddenly coming in, and going out, when the doors are shut, and of vanishing out of sight, and appearing again, as one
would

would conceive of an unsubstantial vision ; then again he is hungry, sits down to meat, and eats his supper. But as those who tell stories of this kind, never provides for all the cases, so it is here: they have told us, that when he arose, he left his grave cloaths behind him ; but they have forgotten to provide other clothes for him to appear in afterwards, or to tell us what he did with them, when he ascended ; whether he stripped all off, or went up, clothes and all. In the case of Elijah, they have been careful enough to make him throw down his mantle ; how it happened not to be burnt in the chariot of fire, *they* also have not told us. But as imagination supplies all deficiencies of this kind, we may suppose, if we please, that it was made of salamander's wool.

Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history may suppose, that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ, as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses, have existed ever since the time of Moses. But the fact is historically otherwise ; there was no such book as the New Testament, till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.

At what time the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, began to appear, is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least shadow of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written ; and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other supposed apostles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any christian church existing, any more than the two tables of stone written on, they pretend, by the finger of God, upon Mount Sinai, and given to Moses, are in the possession of the Jews. And even if they were, there is no possibility of proving the hand-writing in either case. At the time those books were written, there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication, otherwise than by written copies, which any man might make or alter at pleasure, and call them originals. Can we suppose it is consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty, to commit himself, and his will to man upon such precarious means as these ; or that it is consistent we should pin our faith upon such uncertainties ? We cannot make nor alter, nor even imitate so much as one blade of grass that he has made, and yet we can make or alter *words of God*, as easily as words of man*.

K

About

* The former part of the *Age of Reason* has not been published two years, and there is already an expression in it, that is not mine. The expression is, *The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one voice only*. It may be true, but it is not I that

About three hundred and fifty years after the time that Christ is said to have lived, several writings of the kind I am speaking of, were scattered in the hands of divers individuals; and as the church had began to form itself into an hierarchy, or church government with temporal powers, it set itself about collecting them into a code, as we now see them, called *The New Testament*. They decided by vote, as I have before said in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, which of those writings out of the collection they had made, should be the *word of God*, and which should not. The Rabbins of the Jews had decided, by vote, upon the books of the Bible before.

As the object of the church, as is the case in all national establishments of churches, was power and revenue, and terror the means it used; it is consistent to suppose, that the most miraculous and wonderful of the writings they had collected, stood the best chance of being voted. And as to the authenticity of the books, the *vote stands in the place of it*; for it can be traced no higher.

Disputes, however, ran high among the people then calling themselves Christians; not only as to points of doctrine, but as to the authenticity of the books. In the contest between the person called Saint Augustine, and Fauste, about the year 400, the latter says, "The books, called the Evangelists, have been composed long after the times of the apostles by some obscure men, who fearing that the world would not give credit to their relation of matters, of which they could not be informed, have published them under the names of the apostles; and which are so full of sottishness and discordant relations, that there is neither agreement, nor connection between them."

And in another place, addressing himself to the advocates of those books, as being the word of God, he says, "It is thus that your predecessors have inserted, in the scriptures of our Lord, many things, which, though they carry his name, agree not with his doctrine. This is not surprising, *since that we have often proved*, that these things have not been written by himself, nor by his apostles, but that for the greatest part they are founded upon *tales*, upon *vague reports*, and put together

I that have said it. Some person, who might know of that circumstance, has had ded it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions, printed either in England, or in America; and the printers, after that, have erected it into the body of the work, and made me the author of it. If this has happened within such a short space of time, notwithstanding the aid of printing, which prevents the alteration of copies individually; what may not have happened in a much greater length of time, when there was no printing, and when any man who could write, could make a written copy, and call it an original, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?

by

but I know not what, half-Jews, with but little agreement between them; and which they have nevertheless published under the name of the apostles of our Lord, and have thus attributed to them their own *errors and their lies**."

The reader will see by those extracts that the authenticity of the books of the New Testament was denied, and the books treated as tales, forgeries, and lies, at the time they were voted to be the word of God. But the interest of the church, with the assistance of the faggot, bore down the opposition, and at last suppressed all investigation. Miracles followed upon miracles, if we will believe them, and men were taught to say they believed, whether they believed or not. But (by way of throwing in a thought) the French revolution has excommunicated the church from the power of working miracles; she has not been able, with the assistance of all her saints, to work *one* miracle since the revolution began; and as she never stood in greater need than now, we may, without the aid of divination, conclude, that all her former miracles are tricks and lies*.

When we consider the lapse of more than three hundred years intervening between the time that Christ is said to have lived, and the time the New Testament was formed into a book, we must see, even without the assistance of historical evidence, the exceeding uncertainty there is of its authenticity. The authenticity of the book of Homer, so far as regards the

* I have taken those two extracts from Boulanger's Life of Paul, written in French, Boulanger has quoted them from the writings of Augustine against Faustus, to which he refers.

† Boulanger, in his Life of Paul, has collected from the ecclesiastical histories, and the writings of the fathers, as they are called, several matters which shew the opinions that prevailed among the different sects of Christians, at the time the Testament, as we now see it, was voted to be the word of God. The following extracts are from the second chapter of that work.

"The Marcionists (a Christian sect) assured that the evangelists were filled with falsities. The Manichæens, who formed a very numerous sect at the commencement of Christianity, *rejected as false all the New Testament*; and shewed other writings quite different, that they gave for authentic. The Cérinthiens, like the Marcionists, admitted not the Acts of the Apostles. The Encratites and the Sevenians adopted neither the Acts, nor the Epistles of Paul. Chrysostom, in a homily, which he made upon the Acts of the Apostles, says, that in his time, about the year 400, many people knew nothing either of the author, nor of the book. St. Irene, who lived before that time, reports that the Valentinians, like several other sects of the Christians, accused the scriptures of being filled with errors, imperfections, and contradictions. The Ebionites, or Nazarenes, who were the first Christians, rejected *all* the Epistles of Paul, and regarded him as an impostor. They report among other Things, that he was originally a Pagan, that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived some time; and that having a mind to marry the daughter of the high priest, he had himself been circumcised; but that not being able to obtain her, he quarrelled with the Jews, and wrote against circumcision, and against the observation of the sabbath, and against all the legal Ordinances.

authorship, is much better established than that of the New Testament, though Homer is a thousand years the most ancient. It was only an exceeding good poet that could have written the book of Homer, and therefore few men only could have attempted it; and a man capable of doing it, would not have thrown away his own fame, by giving it to another. In like manner, there were but few that could have composed Euclid's Elements, because none but an exceeding good geometrician could have been the author of that work.

But with respect to the books of the New Testament, particularly such parts as tell us of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, any person who could tell a story of an apparition, or of a *man's walking*, could have made such books; for the story is most wretchedly told. The chance, therefore, of forgery in the Testament, is millions to one greater than in the case of Homer or Euclid. Of the numerous priests or parsons of the present day, bishops and all, every one of them can make a sermon, or translate a scrap of Latin, especially if it has been translated a thousand times before: but is there any amongst them that can write poetry like Homer, or science like Euclid? The sum total of a parson's learning, with very few exceptions, is, a b, ab, and hic hæc hoc; and their knowledge of science is, three times one is three; and this is more than sufficient to have enabled them, had they lived at the time, to have written all the books of the New Testament.

As the opportunities of forgery were greater, so also was the inducement. A man could gain no advantage by writing under the name of Homer or Euclid; if he could write equal to them, it would be better that he wrote under his own name; if inferior, he could not succeed. Pride would prevent the former, and impossibility the latter. But with respect to such books as compose the New Testament, all the inducements were on the side of forgery. The best imagined history that could have been made at the distance of two or three hundred years after the time, could not have passed for an original under the name of the real writer; the only chance of success lay in forgery; for the church wanted pretence for its new doctrine, and truth and talents were out of the question.

But as it is not uncommon (as before observed) to relate stories of persons *walking* after they are dead, and of ghosts and apparitions of such as have fallen by some violent or extraordinary means; and as the people of that day were in the habit of believing such things, and of the appearance of angels, and also

also of devils, and of their getting into people's insides, and shaking them like a fit of an ague, and of their being cast out again as if by an emetic; (Mary Magdelene, the book of Mark tells us, had brought up, or been brought to bed of seven devils;) it was nothing extraordinary that some story of this kind should get abroad of the person called Jesus Christ, and become afterwards, the foundation of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each writer told the tale as he heard it, or thereabouts, and gave to his book the name of the saint or the apostle, whom tradition had given as the eye-witness. It is only upon this ground that the contradictions in those books can be accounted for; and if this be not the case, they are downright impositions, lies, and forgeries, without even the apology of credulity.

That they have been written by a sort of half Jews, as the foregoing quotations mention, is discernible enough. The frequent references made to that chief assassin and impostor Moses, and to the men called prophets, establishes this point; and on the other hand, the church has complimented the fraud by admitting the Bible and the Testament to reply to each other. Between the Christian-Jew and the Christian-Gentile, the thing called a prophecy, and the thing prophesied of: the type, and the thing typified; the sign and the thing signified; have been industriously rummaged up, and fitted together like old locks and picklock-keys. The story foolishly enough told of Eve and the serpent, and naturally enough as to the enmity between men and serpents; (for the serpent always bites about the *heel*, because it cannot reach higher; and the man always knocks the serpent about the *head*, as the most effectual way to prevent its biting*;) this foolish story, I say, has been made into a prophecy, a type, and a promise to begin with; and the lying imposition of Isaiah to Ahaz, *That a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*, as a sign that Ahaz should conquer, when the event was that he was defeated, (as already noticed in the observations on the book of Isaiah,) has been perverted, and made to serve as a winder up.

Jonah and the whale are also made into a sign and type. Jonah is Jesus, and the whale is the grave; for it is said, (and they have made Christ to say it of himself,) Matt. chap. xvii. ver. 40, "For as Jonah was *three days and three nights* in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth." But it happens awkwardly

* "It shall bruise thy *head*, and thou shalt bruise his *heel*." Genesis, chap. vii. ver. 15,

enough that Christ, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave; about 36 hours, instead of 72; that is the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night; for they say, he was up on the Sunday morning by sun-rise or before. But as this fits quite as well as the *bite* and the *kick* in Genesis, and the *virgin* and her *son* in Isaiah, it will pass in the lump of *orthodox* things. Thus much for the historical part of the Testament and its evidences.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

The epistles ascribed to Paul, being fourteen in number, almost fill up the remaining part of the Testament. Whether those epistles were written by the person to whom they are ascribed is a matter of no great importance, since that the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. He does not attempt to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and the ascension, and he declares that he had not believed them.

The story of his being struck to the ground as he was journeying to Damascus, has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary; he escaped with life, and that is more than many others have done who have been struck with lightning; and that he should lose his sight for three days, and be unable to eat or drink during that time, is nothing more than is common in such conditions. His companions that were with him appear not to have suffered in the same manner, for they were well enough to lead him the remainder of the journey; neither did they pretend to have seen any vision.

The character of the person called Paul according to the accounts given of him, has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism; he had persecuted with as much heat as he preached afterwards; the stroke he had received had changed his thinking, without altering his constitution; and either as a Jew or a Christian he was the same zealot. Such men are never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. They are always in extremes, as well of action as of belief.

The doctrine he sets out to prove by argument, is the resurrection of the same body, and he advances this as an evidence of immortality. But so much will men differ in their manner of thinking, and in the conclusions they draw from the same premises, that this doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, so far from being an evidence of immortality, appears to me to furnish an evidence against it; for if I have already

ready died in this body, and am raised again in the same body in which I have died, it is presumptive evidence that I shall die again. That resurrection no more secures me against the repetition of dying, than an ague fit, when past, secures me against another. To believe therefore in immortality, I must have a more elevated idea, than is contained in the gloomy doctrine of the resurrection.

Besides, as a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form, than the present. Every animal in the creation excels us in something. The winged insects, without mentioning doves or eagles, can pass over more space, and with greater ease, in a few minutes, than man can in an hour. The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion, almost beyond comparison, and without weariness. Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon, where man, by the want of that ability would perish; and a spider can launch itself from the top, as a playful amusement. The personal powers of man are so limited, and his heavy frame so little constructed to extensive enjoyment, that there is nothing to induce us to wish the opinion of Paul to be true. It is too little for the magnitude of the scene; too mean for the sublimity of the subject.

But all other arguments apart, the *consciousness of existence* is the only conceivable idea we can have of another life, and the continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, or the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same matter, even in this life.

We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. Even legs and arms, which make up almost half the human frame, are not necessary to the consciousness of existence. These may be lost or taken away, and the full consciousness of existence remain; and were their place supplied by wings or other appendages, we cannot conceive that it could alter our consciousness of existence. In short we know not how much, or rather how little, of our composition it is, and how exquisitely fine that little is, that creates in us this consciousness of existence; and all beyond that is like the pulp of a peach distinct and separate from the vegetative speck in the kernel.

Who can say by what exceeding fine action of fine matter it is that a thought is produced in what we call the mind? And yet that thought, when produced, as I now produce the thought

I am

I am writing, is capable of becoming immortal, and is the only production of man that has that capacity.

Statues of brass or marble will perish; and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than a copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and that with materials of any kind, carve it in wood, or engrave it in stone, the thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essentially distinct, and of a nature different from every thing else that we know of, or can conceive. If then the thing produced has in itself a capacity of being immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the self-same thing as consciousness of existence, can be immortal also; and that as independently of the matter it was first connected with, as the thought is of the printing or writing, it first appeared in. The one idea is not more difficult to believe than the other; and we can see that one is true.

That the consciousness of existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter, is demonstrated to our senses in the works of the creation, as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an earth and a heaven, a present and a future state; and comprises, if it may be so expressed, immortality in miniature.

The most beautiful parts of the creation, to our eye, are the winged insect; and they are not so originally. They acquire that form and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar worm of to day, passes in a few days to a torpid figure and a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; every thing is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before: why then must I believe that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter?

In the former part of the *Age of Reason* I have called the creation the true and only real word of God; and this instance, or this text, in the book of creation, not only shews to us that this thing may be so, but that it is so; and
that

that the belief of a future state is *a rational belief*, founded upon facts visible in the creation: for it is not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly, and quit the dunghill for the atmosphere, if we did not know it as a fact.

As to the doubtful jargon ascribed to Paul in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, which makes part of the burial-service of some Christian sectaries, it is as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral. It explains nothing to the understanding; it illustrates nothing to the imagination; but leaves the reader to find any meaning if he can. "All flesh," says he, "is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." And what then? nothing. A cook could have said as much. "There are also", says he, "bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial; the glory of the celestial is *one*, and the glory of the terrestrial is the *other*." And what then? nothing. And what is the difference? nothing that he has told. "There is," says he, "one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars." And what then? nothing; except that he says that *one star differeth from another star in glory*, instead of distance; and he might as well have told us, that the moon did not shine so bright as the sun. All this is nothing better than the jargon of a conjuror, who picks up phrases he does not understand, to confound the credulous people who come to have their fortune told. Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.

Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturalist, and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. "*Thou fool*," says he, "*that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die*." To which one might reply in his own language, and say, Thou fool, Paul, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die *not*; for the grain that dies in the ground, never does, nor can vegetate. It is only the living grains that produce the next crop. But the metaphor, in any point of view, is no simile. It is succession and resurrection.

The progress of an animal, from one state of being to another, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the case; but this of the grain does not; and shews Paul to have been, what he says of others, *a fool*.

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not, is a matter of indifference; they are either argumentative or dogmatical; and as the argument is defective, and the dogmatical part is merely presumptive, it signifies not who wrote them. And the same may be said for the remaining parts of the Testament. It is not upon the Epistles, but upon

what is called the Gospel, contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and upon the pretended prophecies, that the theory of the church, calling itself the Christian church, is founded. The epistles are dependent upon those, and must follow their fate ; for if the story of Jesus Christ be fabulous, all reasoning founded upon it, as a supposed truth, must fall with it.

We know, from history, that one of the principal leaders of this church, Athanasius, lived at the time the New Testament* was formed ; and we know also, from the absurd jargon he has left us, under the name of a creed, the character of the men who formed the New Testament ; and we know also from the same history, that the authenticity of the books, of which it is composed, was denied at the time. It is upon the vote of such as Athanasius, that the Testament was decreed to be the word of God : and nothing can present to us a more strange idea, than that of decreeing the word of God by vote. Those who rest their faith upon such authority, put man in the place of God, and have no true foundation for future happiness. Credulity, however, is not a crime ; but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction. It is strangling in the womb of the conscience the efforts it makes to ascertain truth. We should never force belief upon ourselves in any thing.

I here close the subject on the Old Testament, and the New. The evidence I have produced, to prove them forgeries, is extracted from the books themselves, and acts, like a two-edged sword, either way. If the evidence be denied, the authenticity of the scriptures is denied with it ; for it is scripture-evidence ; and if the evidence be admitted, the authenticity of the books is disproved. The contradictory impossibilities contained in the Old Testament, and the New, put them in the case of a man who swears *for* and *against*. Either evidence convicts him of perjury, and equally destroys reputation.

Should the Bible and Testament hereafter fall, it is not I that have done it. I have done no more, than extracted the evidence from the confused mass of matters with which it is mixed and arranged that evidence in a point of light to be clearly seen, and easily comprehended : and having done this, I leave the reader to judge for himself, as I have judged for myself.

* Athanasius died, according to the church chronology, in the year 371.

CONCLUSION.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have spoken of the three frauds, *mystery*, *miracle*, and *prophecy*: and as I have seen nothing in any of the answers to that work, that in the least affects what I have there said upon those subjects, I shall not encumber this second part with additions, that are not necessary.

I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called *revelation*, and have shewn the absurd misapplication of that term to the books of the Old Testament, and the New; for certainly revelation is out of the question in reciting any thing of which man has been the actor, or the witness. That which a man has done or seen, needs no revelation to tell him he has done it, or seen it; for he knows it already; nor to enable him to tell it, or to write it. It is ignorance, or imposition, to apply the terms revelation in such cases; yet the Bible and Testament are classed under this fraudulent description of being all *revelation*.

Revelation then, so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God reveals of his *will* to man; but though the power of the Almighty, to make such a communication, is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet, the thing so revealed (if any thing ever was revealed, and which, by the bye, it is impossible to prove) is revelation to the person *only to whom it is made*. His account of it to another is not revelation; and whoever puts faith in that account, puts it in the man from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or may have dreamed it; or he may be an imposter, and may lie. There is no possible criterion whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells; for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation. In all such cases, the proper answer would be, "*When it is revealed to me, I will believe it to be revelation; but it is not, and cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it to be revelation before; neither is it proper that I should take the word of man as the word of God, and put man in the place of God.*" This is the manner in which I have spoken of revelation in the former part of the *Age of Reason*; and which, whilst it reverentially admits revelation as a possible thing, because, as before said, to the Almighty all things are possible, it prevents the imposition of one man upon

upon another, and precludes the wicked use of pretended revelation.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation; I totally disbelieve, that the Almighty ever did communicate any thing to man, by any mode of speech, in any language, or by any kind of vision, or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation, and by that repugnance we feel in ourselves to bad actions, and disposition to good ones.

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries, that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion. It has been the most dishonourable belief against the character of the divinity, the most destructive to morality, and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such impostor and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God, in his mouth, and have credit among us.

Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations, of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled; and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes; whence arose they, but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief, that God has spoken to man? The lies of the Bible have been the cause of the one, and the lies of the Testament the other.

Some Christians pretend, that Christianity was not established by the sword; but of what period of time do they speak? It was impossible that twelve men could begin with the sword; they had not the power, but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword, than they did so, and the stake and the faggot too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner. By the same spirit that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, (if the story be true,) he would cut off his head, and the head of his master, had he been able. Besides this, Christianity grounds itself originally upon the Bible, and the Bible was established altogether by the sword, and that in the worst use of it; not to terrify, but to extirpate. The Jews made no converts: they butchered all. The Bible is the fire of the Testament, and both

both are called the *word of God*. The Christians read both books; the ministers preach from both books; and this thing called Christianity is made up of both. It is then false to say that Christianity was not established by the sword.

The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers; and the only reason that can be given for it, is, that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name, they had been nearer the truth.

It is incumbent on every man who reverences the character of the Creator, and who wishes to lessen the catalogue of artificial miseries, and remove the cause that has sown persecutions thick among mankind, to expel all ideas of a revealed religion as a dangerous heresy, and an impious fraud. What is it that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion?—nothing that is useful to man, and every thing that is dishonourable to his maker. What is it the Bible teaches us?—rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us?—to believe that the almighty committed debauchery with a woman, engaged to be married; and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.

As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in those books, they make no part of this pretended thing, revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience, and the bonds by which society is held together, and without which, it cannot exist; and are nearly the same in all religions, and in all societies. The Testament teaches nothing new upon this subject; and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean, and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles, as the Jews, than it is in the Testament. It is there said, Proverbs xxiv. ver. 21, “*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.*”* but when it

* According to what is called Christ's sermon on the mount in the book of Matthew, where, among some other good things, a great deal of this feigned morality is introduced, it is there expressly said, that the doctrine of forbearance, or of not retaliating injuries, *was not any part of the doctrine of the Jews*; but as this doctrine is found in Proverbs, it must, according to that statement have been copied from the Gentiles, from whom Christ had learned it. Those men, whom Jewish and Christian idolators have abusively called heathen, had much better and clearer ideas of justice and morality than are to be found in the Old Testament, so far as it is Jewish; or in the New. The answer of Solon on the question, “Which is the most perfect popular government,” has never been exceeded by any man since his time, as containing a maxim of political morality. “That says he, *where the least injury done to the meanest individual, is considered as an insult on the whole constitution.*” Solon lived above 500 years before Christ.

it is said, as in the Testament, "*If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;*" it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel.

Loving of enemies is another dogma of feigned morality, and has besides no meaning. It is incumbent on man, as a moralist, that he does not revenge an injury; and it is equally as good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation; each retaliates on the other, and calls it justice: but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for a crime. Besides, the word *enemies* is too vague and general to be used in a moral maxim, which ought always to be clear and defined, like a proverb. If a man be the enemy of another from mistake and prejudice, as in the case of religious opinions, and sometimes in politics, that man is different to an enemy at heart with a criminal intention; and it is incumbent upon us, and it contributes also to our own tranquillity, that we put the best construction upon a thing that it will bear. But even this erroneous motive in him makes no motive for love on the other part; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to its duties. that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed; and, if they could be, would be productive of evil; or, as before said, be premiums for crime. The maxim *of doing as we would be done unto* does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies; for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their enemies, are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing; for the doctrine is hypocritical; and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part, I disown the doctrine, and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man, or any set of men, either in the American revolution, or in the French revolution; or that I have, in any case, returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil; and wherever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose, that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the creator by forbearing with each other, for he forbears with all: but this doctrine would imply that he loved man, not in proportion as he was good, but as he was bad.

If

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must see there is no occasion for such thing as *revealed religion*. What is it we want to know? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an Almighty power, that governs and regulates the whole? And is not the evidence that this creation holds out to our senses infinitely stronger than any thing we can read in a book, that any impostor might make and call the word of God? As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in every man's conscience.

Here we are. The existence of an Almighty power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though we cannot conceive, as it is impossible we should, the nature and manner of its existence. We cannot conceive how we came here ourselves, and yet we know for a fact that we are here. We must know also, that the power that called us into being can, if he please, and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and therefore, without seeking any other motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know before-hand that he can. The probability, or even possibility of the thing is all that we ought to know; for if we knew it as a fact, we should be the mere slaves of terror, our belief would have no merit, and our best actions no virtue.

Deism then teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the deist. He there reads, in the hand writing of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence; and the immutability of his power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. The probability that we may be called to account hereafter, will, to reflecting minds, have the influence of belief; for it is not our belief or disbelief, that can make or unmake the fact. As this is the state we are in, and which it is proper we should be in, as free agents, it is the fool only, and not the philosopher, nor even the prudent man, that will live as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by being mixed with the strange fable of the Christian creed, and with the wild adventures related in the Bible, and the obscurity and obscure nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all these things in a confused mass, he confounds fact with fable; and as he cannot believe all, he feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief of a God, is a belief distinct from all other things, and ought not to be confounded with any. The notion of a Trinity of Gods has enfeebled the belief of *one* God. A multiplication of beliefs
acts

acts as a division of belief; and in proportion as any thing is divided, it is weakened.

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form, instead of fact; of notion, instead of principle; morality is banished to make room for an imaginary thing, called faith, and this faith has its origin in a supposed debauchery; a man is preached instead of a God; an execution is an object for gratitude; the preachers daub themselves with the blood, like a troop of assassins, and pretend to admire the brilliancy it gives them; they preach a humdrum sermon on the merits of the execution; then praise Jesus Christ for being executed, and condemn the Jews for doing of it.

A man, by hearing all this nonsense lumped and preached together, confounds the God of the creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here, or hereafter.

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last that man believes. But pure and simple deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests, but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of church and state; the church human, and the state tyrannic.

Were a man impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be, with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief: he would stand in awe of God, and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it acts alone. This is deism.

But when, according to the Christian Trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a dying man, and another

ther part, called the Holy Ghost, by a flying pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.*

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold him in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science, without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.

Instead then of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted, and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The principles we discover there, are eternal, and of divine origin: they are the foundation of all the science that exists in the world, and must be the foundation of theology.

We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute, but by following some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his power, if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom, but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the Creator of man is the Creator of science, and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe, to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet, their connections and dependance on each other, and to know the system of laws established by the Creator, that governs and regulates the whole; he would then conceive far beyond what any church-theology can teach him,

* The book called the book of Matthew, says, chap. iii. ver. 16, that *the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove*. It might as well have said a goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much a nonsensical lie as the other. The second of acts, ver. 2, 3, says, that it descended in a mighty *rustling wind*, in the shape of *cloven tongues*; perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is fit only for tales of witches and wizards.

the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator: he would then see, that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts, by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source: his mind, exalted by the scene, and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude, as it increased in knowledge: his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed, that had connection with the principles of the creation, as every thing of agriculture, of science, and of the mechanical arts has, would teach him more of God, and of the gratitude he owes to him, than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the grovelling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.

Though man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual scene I have described, he can demonstrate it; because he has knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed. We know that the greatest works can be represented in model, and that the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch, or an acre of ground, will measure to millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter has the same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle, that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship, will do it on the ocean; and when applied to what are called the heavenly bodies, will ascertain, to a minute, the time of an eclipse, though those bodies are millions of miles distant from us. This knowledge is of divine origin; and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church, that teaches man nothing.*

All the knowledge man has of science and of machinery, by the aid of which his existence is rendered comfortable upon

* The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and in doing this, they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a sun; when it is the presence or absence of the sun that is the cause of day and night, and what is called his rising and setting that of morning and evening. Besides, it is a puerile and pitiful idea, to suppose the Almighty to say, Let there be light. It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjurer uses, when he says to his cups and balls, Presto, be gone, and most probably has been taken from it; as Moses and his rod is a conjurer and his wand. Longinus calls this expression the sublime; and by the same rule, that of the conjurer is sublime, too, for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of the critics, like some parts of Edmund Burk's sublime and beautiful, is like a wind-mill just visible in a fog, which imagination might distort into a flying mountain; or an archangel; or a flock of wild geese.

earth, and without which he would be scarcely distinguishable in appearance and condition from a common animal, comes from the great machine and structure of the universe. The constant and unwearied observations of our ancestors, upon the movements and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in what are supposed to have been the early ages of the world, have brought this knowledge upon earth. It is not Moses and the prophets, nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, that have done it. The Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation, the first philosopher, and original teacher of all science. Let us then learn to reverence our master, and not forget the labours of our ancestors.

Had we at this day no knowledge of machinery, and were it possible that man could have a view, as I have before described, of the structure and machinery of the universe, he would soon conceive the idea of constructing some at least of the mechanical works we now have; and the idea so conceived, would progressively advance in practice. Or could a model of the universe, such as is called an orrery, be presented before him, and put in motion, his mind would arrive at the same idea. Such an object, and such a subject, would, whilst it improved him in knowledge useful to himself as a man and a member of society, as well as entertaining, afford far better matter for impressing him with a knowledge of, and a belief in the Creator, and of the reverence and gratitude that man owes to him, than the stupid texts of the Bible and the Testament, from which, be the talents of the preacher what they may, only stupid sermons can be preached. If man must preach, let him preach something that is edifying, and from texts that are known to be true.

The Bible of the creation is inexhaustable in texts. Every part of science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy; for gratitude, as for human improvement. It will, perhaps, be said, that if such a revolution in the system of religion take place, every preacher ought to be a philosopher. *Most certainly*, and every house of devotion a school of science.

It has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science, and the light reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species, to make room for the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself, and the founder of a new religion

religion to supersede and expel the Jewish religion. And to find pretence and admission for these things, they must have supposed his power or his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is the imperfection of the judgement. The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator have never changed, with respect either to the principles of science, or the properties of matter. Why then is it to be supposed they have changed with respect to man?

I here close the subject. I have shewn in all the foregoing parts of this work, that the Bible and Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof of it, to be refuted, if any one can do it; and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work, to rest on the mind of the reader; certain as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

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END OF THE SECOND PART OF THE AGE OF REASON.

